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Departments.~

6 LETTERS

8 EDITORIAL

So, You Wanna Be a Writer? Here's a short story 'contest' for you.

10 BOOKS BY GAHAN WILSON

Aliens and ghosts add chilling twists to World War II and the Gulf War.

16 MOVIES BY ERIC NIDEROST

Fantasy and historical adventure are the staples for three new movies: *First Knight*, *Rob Roy*, and *Braveheart*.

26 FOLKROOTS BY TERRI WINDLING

Native American legends inspire magical fiction, art and music.

62 GALLERY BY JANE FRANK

"Les Edwards has been deep into our nightmares and brought out things that were never meant to see the light."

76 GAMES BY M.C. SUMNER

You can be a silicon superstar with Maxis' *Klik & Play*.

86 CONTRIBUTORS

'REALMS OF FANTASY

Fiction.~

38 BREAD CRUMBS & STONES

By Lisa Goldstein

Some paths demand that they be walked, and walk you must, no matter where they take you.

44 THORNS

By Martha Wells

What ever happened to Sleeping Beauty? Sometimes the old tales just missed the subtleties.

50 OUTSIDE THE WALLS

By Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

Red Rotting Head pits her pure heart and iron will against three New York wolves in a dark and twisted look at a favorite tale.

52 MENDING MARIS

By Anne Young

Old angers die hard. Sometimes they even refuse to die at all. Can a husband and wife make peace before death separates them forever?

56 MOTHER MOVES IN

By Deborah Wheeler

Where do guilt, love, fear, anger and hope conjoin? Watch a mother with her daughter, and you'll see.

68 THE PURL OF THE PACIFIC

By Alan Dean Foster

Mad Amos Malone and his cranky unicorn lock horns with a magician bent on reawakening an old volcano. More than magic awaits them in the depths of the mountain.

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Dear Ms. McCarthy,

In your April issue, Michael Cassutt wrote an article about fantasy television series. I would like to correct some points he made. In his first sentence he referred to the *Highlander* television series as science fiction. Any viewer of this series can plainly see it is a fantasy series and has no elements of sci-fi. The only thing that connects *Highlander* with sci-fi is an abomination of continuity (*Highlander 2: The Quickening*).

He also mentioned shooting in exotic places being fine for a movie like *Hercules* but not for a TV series. I hate to burst his bubble, but *Hercules* has become a weekly one-hour series (and rather a good one at that).

Mr. Cassutt also talked about *Weird Science* being part of fantasy's checkered history on television. Since *Weird Science* is still in production, that makes it part of fantasy's checkered present, not history.

With all this, he failed to mention other series fantasy shows such as *Dark Shadows*, *Forever Knight*, and *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*.

In short, after reading his article, I've concluded that Mr. Cassutt makes more television than he watches, and I watch more television than I should.

Martin Howard Wilmington, IL

Michael Cassutt replies:

Mr Howard is entirely correct; I was confusing *Highlander* the TV series with *Highlander* the movie series. My point, however, is that the show is considered to be SF by people in the business. Yes, *Hercules* the TV movie series has since become a regular series, and while I agree it looks promising, I'm not sure anyone is happy about producing it in another hemisphere. (It's a rule of faith among TV people that somebody is out there watching all these shows. I'm glad to finally know that that person's name is Martin Howard.)

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

The December '94 issue of *Realms of Fantasy* was the first to come into my hands, and it so impressed me that I had to send my comments. "A Little Moonshine" is charming, "Beyond Munchen Town" is gripping, and "The Lazarus Chronicle" has an opening hook that ought to be shown to beginning writers as an example of the technique. I especially enjoyed seeing two historical fantasies, a type that I have a special fondness for, being a medievalist. Gahan Wilson's comments on the trivialization of fairies intrigued me. I agree, and I also think the same awful fate befell angels—talk about a fall—which had certainly been reduced to Hallmark figurines long before the New Age. All in all, I like the magazine tremendously. Best wishes for your continued success.

Pauline J. Alama Rochester, NY

Thanks for your comments. I too have a weakness for historical writing of all genres—fantasy, mystery, nonfiction, and—all right—I'll admit it, even romance. I think it has something to do with wanting to get a peek into the past—what was it really like back then?—that ties in to my love of fantasy and science fiction in general. The desire to know more about the essentially unknowable is a powerful urge.

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

When I read my first issue, I was delighted to see that those of us who, though older, still cling to the magical, were being aided in our quest by the large print of your stories. But by the time I had read the complete story, I rushed to the telephone to make a mundane and very non-fantastical appointment with my optometrist. Something was very wrong: the stories were wonderful and compelling, but I was still falling by the wayside as I reached the end. Next morning, I picked up the issue to read with my coffee—perhaps it was the caffeine, but light dawned along with the day: It was not my eyes! The print of each story steadily diminished. I've just resubscribed to your wonderful magazine, and love everything else about your publication. But please either make changes less abrupt, or pick one type size and stick with it till the end—I don't desire to be closer to my optometrist than I am to your publication!

Ryanne Moore Siletz, OR

Sorry to hear the varying type sizes are giving you trouble, but unfortunately, if we printed the entire story in the size of the opening paragraphs, we'd only have room for two stories in the entire issue. Maybe now that you know to expect it, you'll find the switches easier to cope with.

Dear Madam or Sir:

I absolutely love your magazine! I'm a huge fan of anything involving fantasy, be it pictures, books, articles and now magazines. When I purchased the very first issue of *Realms of Fantasy*, I went straight home and read each story. My mother, as a Christmas gift, got me a subscription, and I was honestly overjoyed. I just wanted you to know how much I love your magazine.

Rachel Romanelli Ocala, FL

You're lucky to have a mother who gave you the best gift of all—not our magazine, but a love of reading! It's a love that will never leave you, never grow old, and never let you down. Use it wisely.

Your letters and comments are welcomed. Make sure you mark them as letters or they're likely to get mixed in with writer's guidelines requests. Send them to: Letters to the Editor, *Realms of Fantasy*, P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760. Or better yet e-mail: s.mccarthy@genie.geis.com.

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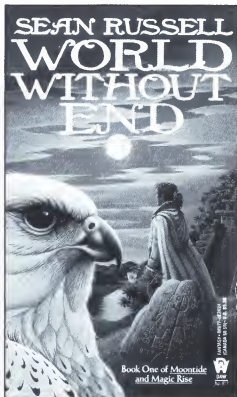
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"DEAR EDITOR," THE LETTER BEGAN. "I HAVE A GOOD IDEA WHICH I THINK would increase you're (sic) magazines (sic) circulation. How about if you ran a short story contest. Many people will enter and buy the magazine."

What a fine idea. I think I'll do it. In fact I think I'll do it with every issue. That's right, folks. I am hereby announcing the *Realms of Fantasy* short story contest. Simply send me your best story, neatly typed and double spaced, accompanied by a self-addressed stamped return envelope. Entries will be judged on several levels. Neatness and correct

spelling, grammar, and punctuation will be worth 30 percent. (After all, I've got to be able to read them and understand what it is you're trying to say, right?) Originality of ideas will count for another 30 percent. Writing style will be worth another 30 percent. Your voice must be fluid, your theme compelling, your plot involving. And an undefinable something that makes a story stand out above all others will be worth 10 percent. The preceding percentages may vary, depending on my mood, the time of day I read your entry, the weather, how many stories I read just before yours, and how my children behaved that day. All judge's decisions are final and are not subject to discussion. As the sole judge, I will read every entry, and the winning stories will get a cash award, depending on their length, and will be published in an upcoming issue.

Perhaps I am being too subtle. Let me explain: Each and every issue is a short story contest. People send me lots and lots of stories. I read them all and pick the best.

The winners of this 'contest' get a cash prize and their stories published in a national magazine. Losers will have to get up, brush off and try again. Art by Louis Fairfax Muckley.



The "winners" get money and get published in a national magazine. Isn't that pretty much the prize you all want? Judging by my mail, both here and over the years at the various book and magazine publishing companies I've worked at, many of you seem to think that there's some sort of "trick" involved in getting published. If I had a dime for every time an earnest questioner asked me at a convention, "But what is it you're looking for?" I'd be filing this editorial from my beach house in Hawaii. And the only answer I can give, and the only answer any editor can give is: good stories.

So, how do you win the *Realms of Fantasy* short story contest? The same way you get to Carnegie Hall: Practice. Read every short story you get your hands on, and not only in the SF and fantasy fields either. Read mysteries and true confessions and Westerns and mainstream short stories. Get yourself a copy of the *Norton Anthology* and read it cover to cover. Get a copy of *Strunk and White*. Get a *Chicago Manual*. Join writers' workshops and learn how to dissect a story and find out what its guts look like. When you've finished reading a story, don't just say, 'Yeah, good story,' or 'Boy, did that one suck dead rats.' Ask yourself why you liked it or didn't like it. Were the characters wooden? Was the plot stupid? Was there any story there at all beyond the plot? And by the way, what is the difference between the plot and the story? Go find out. But be prepared to discover that writing is not fun—it's very hard work, which could send you screaming into the darkened streets, never to be heard from again.

Oh, and one more thing: when you've done all this work, and you know the structure of a story inside out, and your writing is as beautiful as Wolfe's, as accessible as Steinbeck's and as important as Dostoevski's, remember the words of wisdom I'm about to impart (and this is the true secret of publishing): DON'T QUIT YOUR DAY JOB! You ain't never gonna make a living writing short stories, pal. And most of you won't ever make a living writing novels either, and they take a heck of a lot longer to write. But hey, don't let me discourage you. If you're still interested, then maybe you have the kernel of true writerdom within you, just waiting to be popped. If so, I'll welcome your entries in the on-going, never-ending *Realms of Fantasy* short fiction contest.

For my mother, who taught me to know what I like. ♡

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AN AMAZING PERCENTAGE OF THE SUPPOSEDLY "HARD SCIENCE" UNDERLYING AND purportedly supporting the speculations of science fiction is startlingly soft, and that was one of the main reasons I often grew exceedingly tired and restive in the old, old days when righteous authors and defenders of nuts-and-bolts science fiction used to wax contemptuous at the immaturity of authors and readers of—*snort*—"fantasy."

Where did they get off, I asked myself—and now and then had the unmitigated gall to ask them (but I was young and brash and had yet to learn my manners)—how dast they be so high and mighty about warlocks and spells when their dream spinnings concerning intergalactic gallivantings and multitudinous encounters between aliens inhabiting planets divided by light-years depended absolutely on a ploy as patently and pathetically shaky as a space warp? Whence comes that presumption which gives them the nerve to elevate their noses so disapprovingly at folk innocently amusing themselves with tales of Leprechauns and ancient curses while they have the nerve to endlessly pen stories uneasily founded on a concept so absurdly full of holes and contradictions as time

travel? Humph, said I then, and I still do.

I was, however, always very careful to tiptoe around the smallest mention of another basic science fiction notion when in those debative modes, and that was the idea of alternative universes. I did this for two basic reasons: 1) It is, unless some of the leading figures in modern physics are really disastrously on the wrong track, very likely to be absolutely true; and 2) Though I love my ghosts and ancient dooms as well as the next fantasist, I must admit—painful though it may be (and, in fact, is)—that I can think of nothing as fundamentally awesome and unnerving and downright *weird* in all fantastic literature as this decidedly science fictionary conception.

Of course you are familiar with it, dear reader, but think on alternate universes again: the creepy soul-challenging idea that somewhere, dead parallel to our very own here and now, actually touching us, so to speak, probably literally *interfusing* with us, there are present at this instant whole cosmos wherein dwell living creatures who are, by varying degrees, not quite us but are every other possible variation on ourselves. That these familiar/totally strange entities are at this very moment—by whatever vast variety of things they might use for moments—living out every other possible variation on our lives, unless things have not worked out so well for them as they have for us in this universe and they have already died. Some of them are healthier than we are, some sicker; some happier, some sadder; some would strike us as being ourselves as horrifying demons, others would seem to be ourselves transmuted into angels, and each and every blessed one of them, as we know only too well from our own experience, are taking themselves to be the one and only real McCoy's.

I tell you frankly that rabbits run over my grave in droves every time I think on alternative universes! Anytime I find I've awakened in the middle of the night and am staring into the darkness and starting to mull them over, you can bet I get right up and fix myself a nice, cozy glass of warm milk and am careful to think on things soft and fuzzy until I drift back into dreamland, and I strongly recommend that you do the same.

Not that fine, innocent fun can't be had with the idea in science fiction, mind you, and much has through the years; so many, in fact, that Del Rey books has even invented a special categorical appellation for novels con-

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cerning the notion, and they print it proudly on all books that strike them as appropriate: "Fiction/Alternate History," which is, of course, merely a less intimidating way of saying alternate universes.

They have seen fit to print this official description on the spine of *Worldwar: In the Balance* (Del Ray Books, NY, 565 pp., Paperback, \$5.99), which is written by one of the best operators in this field, Harry Turtledove. To the best of my knowledge, Turtledove started to get immersed in Fiction/Alternate History when he wrote *The Misplaced Legion*, which was about a bunch of Roman soldiers adrift in our space/time continuum and which eventually blossomed into a four-book series. Eventually he followed this up with *The Guns of the South*, a volume I would be sure to include in my curriculum were I to teach high school history as it does such a skillful and highly entertaining job of adroitly clarifying what the Civil War was basically all about that I seriously believe it would have at least a feasible chance of sticking in the brain of even the dullest and most indifferent student.

As with all these previous books, *Worldwar: In the Balance* takes place in a military environment, a setting he understands extremely well and can describe with great accuracy and expert insight. I've encountered few other authors who can make the whys and wherefores of complex battles so clear and comprehensible to the reader with-

out once detaching him or her from the rush and roar of the conflict he's describing.

This time Turtledove focuses on World War II as his text, his novel joining it when things have moved well along. The United States has become thoroughly involved because of the Japanese assault in the Pacific, Britain is throwing Spitfires by handfuls at the Nazi's pummeling bombers, and Hitler has been foolish enough to join his Napoleonic attack on Russia, the seemingly irresistible target of Western European conquerors.

All of Earth's most powerful nations are engaged, one way or another, in a powerful combat whose scale and technology totally dwarf any prior military struggle which has taken place on the globe. The planet has transformed itself into one vast military camp on red alert, organized for war as never before in its entire history.

With superb irony, Turtledove lets this be the moment of arrival of the huge war fleet of the "Race," which has spent the last fifty years (by their own planet's reckoning—it is only twenty-five years Earth time) crossing the starry gulfs of space to invade and conquer Tosev 3, which is their name for our sweet blue orb.

The Race is a lovely job of alien-creating. They are slight beings, considerably shorter than humans, but they are formidable in their lithe, lizards way, quick and adroit in movement and still as statues when at rest. They are scaly and have vestigial stumps

where, assumedly, more primitive forms of them used to have tails. Their faces are a little hard to take, particularly their eyes, which are mounted on independently moving turrets, after the fashion of our chameleons, so that they can look in any two directions they choose to over their catlike snouts. Their jaws are lipless and contain many sharp, nasty little teeth, which are unpleasantly exposed when they gape their mouths in silent laughter (they know no other kind).

The Race is sublimely confident of a quick victory over us, for it has had a glittering series of triumphs up to now; Rabotev 2 fell twenty-eight thousand years ago, Halless 1 proved very easy plucking eighteen thousand years later, and the information brought back by probes sent out in recent centuries indicates that this cold, wet planet will also be something of a pushover.

The book opens with a counsel of war aboard the invasion fleet bannership *127th Emperor Hetta* with, fine ironic handling on Turtledove's part, lays out the essential problem which these little lizards have all unknowingly blundered into and demonstrates amusingly that not the least part of it is their own bloody arrogance.

Under the guidance of Fleetlord Atvar, the officers gathered in the ship's command station are treated to a hologram show of images sent back by the information probe, and their mounting amusement at the primitive images paraded before them is capped by the pathetic image of the best example of a fighting creature of our species that the probe could find in its most recent survey.

Now the survey was, admittedly, taken some little time ago, but since the Race's social and technical evolution, and that of every other race it has so far encountered, is glacially slow-moving, it has, in its vanity, assumed that all other races move likewise, so what do a mere 800 revolutions of Tosev 3 matter, after all?

The fighter shown in the hologram, a poor, big lump of a creature (the Race almost immediately dubs our species "big uglies"), is awkwardly bundled into a rusting suit of armor and slouched clumsily atop a bored-looking, hairy quadruped. Of course the sight of this ridiculous being and the delightful vastness of the technological gap it implies is enough to make all officers present let their reptilian jaws gape open in silent hilarity.

Of course it is no time at all before the Race is rudely made aware of recent strides taken by our military hardware since the days of that long-dead goode knight, and only a while longer before the awful implications of the continuing and even accelerating high velocity of our technical evolution sinks into their increasingly unhappy heads and forces them into painful attempts at speeding up their own abilities to change plans and calculations, but they console themselves with the glaring superiority of their weaponry, which includes, of course, atomic bombs. Unfortunately for them they are totally

Books To Look For

The Hollowing, by Robert Holdstock (Roc). You've read the reviews, now read the book. Finally available in paperback, this is the acclaimed third book in the World Fantasy Award winning Mythago Wood series. Don't miss it.

Redmagic, by Crawford Killian (Del Rey). Tired of the same old Norse and Celtic fantasy sagas? Take a look at this one, and it's predecessor, *Greenmagic*, set in the rich myths of the Native American culture.

Regenesis, by Julia Ecklar (Ace). A legend of tomorrow's scientific warrior trying to rescue the remaining species of a lost world called Earth. A spaceship puts Noah's ark into an imaginative future.

Baker's Boy, by J. V. Jones (Warner Aspect). Described by the publisher as "cutting edge fantasy," this sounds like an ambitious and interesting novel from a brand-new writer, and new writers deserve your support and attention.

Knights of the Black Earth, by Margaret Weis and Don Perkins (Roc). Margaret Weis: the hits just keep coming.... This is the science-fantasy follow up to the million copy bestselling *Star of the Guardians* series, and it's sure to keep her

track record on track.

The Stolen Throne, by Harry Turtledove (Del Rey). This is the start of a brand-new series set in the popular world of the Viddess and Krispos novels, by the acclaimed author of *Worldwar: Tilting the Balance*. The aforementioned Tales of Krispos series sold nearly a quarter of a million copies.

The Oak Above the Kings, by Patricia Kennealy-Morrison (Roc). For those of you interested in modern cultural history, the Morrison part of the author's name refers to Jim Morrison, to whom she was married. The publisher refers to this as Arthurian legend on a distant planet, which ought to appeal to a fairly broad cross section of readers.

The Key of the Keplian, by Andre Norton and Lyn McConchie (Warner Aspect). For fans of Ms. Norton's immensely popular *Witch World* series, this is Volume One in a new *Witch World* trilogy.

The Queen of Ashes, by Deborah Turner Harris (Ace). The bestselling co-author of the Adept series continues the saga of Caledon with a brooding tale of an almost-Scotland.

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unaware that Fermi and other notable physicists are at that very moment busily and—it goes without saying—speedily constructing humankind's first atomic pile beneath a football field in Chicago, Illinois.

The book (it turns out it is the first of a series, and I admit I am looking forward to the next, which will be entitled *Worldwar: Tilting the Balance*, which even yet does not sound like a final title [to me at least]) rolls along very entertainingly, going from one neatly illustrative group of humans and aliens to the next, and following their adventures as the interplanetary war expands and evolves.

Turtledove has, as he did in his *Guns of the South*, a sure hand on all historical implications, and he uses his alternative universe to make telling points on Nazis, Jews, baseball players, scientists, Shintos, and the widely diverse effects sex and war have on both humans and aliens.

He also does a grand job of bringing to life any number of famous historical personages and illuminates them considerably by plunging them into this bizarre situation. We see how unpleasant an encounter with General George S. Patton might be to aliens; we have an outstanding chance to observe the nuclear physicist Enrico Fermi put his brain to solving a problem it never had to solve in the universe we live in, and we are privileged to observe how the arrival of the Race forced the development of a number of highly instructive and difficult alliances among our usually squabbling nations, the most dramatic of them being a creepily believable meeting between Commissar Vyacheslav Molotov and the German Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler, which I, for one, found extremely educational.

I certainly hope we win!

Holy Terror, by Josephine Boyle, St. Martin's Press, NY, 283 pp., hardcover, \$21.95.

I blush to say that before I received a copy of this handsomely produced book (the cover illustration by Colin Sullivan is as fine a study as one could wish for of a haunted manse), I did not know the work of Josephine Boyle, but after reading *Holy Terror*, I am certainly going to track down her other available work as she is an expert exponent of the very best kind of this sort of classic British spooky novel.

Not that the book is at all dated, it is by no means a scurry back into the past as, say, many Anne Riceian epics might be accused of being. It decidedly takes place in our present era; moreover, it cleverly shows how our times, and we, are haunted and menaced by extremely up-to-date, even high-tech, specters.

The fundamental and resoundingly effective ploy of the above-mentioned classic British spooky novel is to first establish a solid day-to-day environment for the characters to live in. The more solid and reliable this environment appears to be, the better. It

Continued on page 34

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Fantasy and historical adventure are the staples for three new movies.

THE COSTUME MOVIE, ONCE A HOLLYWOOD STAPLE, VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED IN THE late 1960s, when the cycle of big-budget epics—films like *Ben Hur* and *Lawrence of Arabia*—played out. As audiences flocked to slasher films, contemporary dramas, and the high-tech wizardry of the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* series, historical costumers seemed irrelevant. But in 1991, Warner Bros defied conventional wisdom by releasing *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*. The Kevin Costner vehicle confounded its critics by grossing over \$150 million in theaters alone. Thanks to its enormous success, costume pictures are currently enjoying a revival.

First Knight, *Braveheart*, and *Rob Roy* are among 1995's current crop of costume pictures. They're a disparate trio in some ways, different in mood and execution. Two of the films, *Braveheart* and *Rob Roy*, are based on real-life characters and actual historical events. *First Knight* is firmly anchored in classic fantasy. But all three have sword-wielding, larger-than-

life heroes at their central core.

Billed as a "romantic fantasy adventure," *First Knight* is a retelling of the King Arthur legends. The film stars Sean Connery (*Untouchables*) as King Arthur, Richard Gere (*Sommersby*) as Lancelot, and Julia Ormond as Guinevere. The rest of the cast is rounded out by such familiar names as Ben Cross and distinguished English actor Sir John Gielgud.

A film like *First Knight* has built-in difficulties to overcome. The plot is familiar; various aspects of the Arthurian cycle have been filmed many times over the course of the last forty years. The roots of the Arthurian genre can be traced to 1949's *The Adventures of Sir Galahad*, a cheaply produced, fifteen-part serial. Made at Columbia, the same studio that's producing *First Knight*, the serial starred George Reeves, later famed for starring in TV's *Superman*.

The Adventures of Sir Galahad added little to the Arthurian mythos, being a thinly disguised excuse to place the hero in jeopardy as a "cliffhanger" for the next week's installment. Reeves managed to cheat death by quicksand, horses' hooves, sharp spikes, fire, runaway wagons, and many other hazards. At the end, Galahad exposes Mordred as the villain of the piece, and is rewarded by King Arthur with knighthood.

But the cycle hit its stride with *Prince Valiant* (1954), not really part of the classical Arthurian legend but a modern grafting based on the well-drawn comic strip by Harold Foster. The film boasted high production values and was at least partly shot in Britain. A youthful Robert Wagner turned in an earnest performance in the title role, though critics laughed at his pageboy wig.

Other films followed, including the Alan Ladd vehicle *The Black Knight* (1953) and *Knights of the Round Table* (1954). *Knights of the Round Table* was an attempt to reproduce the success of *Ivanhoe* by using much the same cast, but the results were uneven. *The Black Knight* was even worse, with Alan

Mel Gibson produces, directs and even plays the title character in *Braveheart*. Here Gibson brandishes an old-fashioned 'lethal weapon' as he fights for Scottish independence against the English.



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Ladd ho-humming around the countryside "like a tired businessman."

Cornel Wilde's *Lancelot and Guinevere* (1962) (*The Sword of Lancelot* was its 1963 U.S. title) was the best of the earlier Arthurian films, a dark-hued portrait of idealism eroded by passion and politics. *Excalibur* (1981) was the last major Arthurian effort to date. It was a powerful film, full of troubling images and infused with an eroticism that's a far cry from courtly love.

Arthur's story is subject to many interpretations, because so little is known of the man himself. He lived in late fifth-century Britain, a time of chaos, bloodshed, and war. The Roman Empire had collapsed, and much of civilization had fallen with it. Arthur may have been a Romano-Celtic leader, a rock of resistance against the waves of "barbarian" invaders that convulsed the island.

Legend says Arthur won a great victory over his foes at Mount Badon but was later killed. As the Middle Ages progressed, Arthur was transformed from a rude chieftain into a courtly king, a champion of civilization against the dark tide of barbarism. Welsh bards laid the foundation of his myth, which was augmented by twelfth-century writer Geoffrey of Monmouth and other medieval chroniclers.

All the elements of the heroic myth were in place by the sixteenth century. Lancelot, the Round Table, Camelot, Guinevere, and all the rest became part of the Arthurian canon.



Richard Gere stars as the solitary warrior Lancelot in *First Knight*. Also starring Sean Connery as King Arthur, the film tells the Arthurian legend from the charismatic Lancelot's perspective.

But since the original source works are never read today, filmmakers can freely adapt what suits them and reject the rest.

First Knight has Lancelot (Richard Gere) as a solitary warrior, a mercenary with few possessions save his sword. That sets him in

sharp contrast to earlier films, in which Lancelot is a powerful landed noble with castles and riches of his own. That's the film's selling point—not only is it told from Lancelot's perspective, but it features him as a charismatic vagabond.

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By making Lancelot a loner, a soldier of fortune who is shunned by society, the movie makes the knight a more compelling figure. He meets Guinevere by chance, saves her, but then falls in love with the beautiful queen. That's the paradox: his love reconciles him to his fellow creatures, yet this same love is forbidden by the society he's attempting to rejoin.

First Knight has an advantage over *Rob Roy* and *Braveheart* at least in one respect. Since it's rooted in myth, it does not have to be faithful to any one time period. The film's look is stylized, with a kind of generic medieval flavor that can borrow elements from different centuries. All Arthurian films have shared this quality, mixing different styles of costume and architecture with a free hand.

By contrast, *Rob Roy* is based on eighteenth century Scottish history. The film stars Liam Neeson (*Schindler's List*, *Nell*) as the title character, Jessica Lange (*Tootsie*, *Cape Fear*) as his wife, Mary, and John Hurt (*Elephant Man*) as Montrose, Rob's nemesis. Others in the cast include Tim Roth (*Pulp Fiction*) and Eric Stoltz (*Pulp Fiction*).

The story is set in early eighteenth century Scotland, which is newly united with England but deeply resents the 'shotgun marriage.' Robert ("Rob Roy" or "Rob the Red") MacGregor is a highlander who falls prey to the evil machinations of Montrose and his henchman Cunningham (Roth). When Rob borrows money from Montrose, he finds he has unwittingly entered into a pact with a devil.

Rob becomes an outlaw and rebel, a hunted fugitive with a band of desperate men. He fights against injustice but becomes a hero almost by default. Screenwriter Alan Sharp, himself a Scot, ironically gained a reputation in Hollywood by writing scripts for Westerns like *Ulzana's Raid*.

He was a logical choice for *Rob Roy*, but not only because of his Celtic blood.

It was the character that drew Sharp to accept the assignment. "The character had plenty to offer in the way of catching my interest," Sharp explains. "Rob Roy was a man of honor caught up in circumstances which were way beyond his power to control. The really intriguing part came in exploring how a man of action reacts when his actions cannot ultimately affect the outcome."

The real Robert MacGregor was an amalgam of hero and rogue, patriot and thief. A cattle dealer, he also had a lucrative protection racket on the side. He and his followers would guard other people's herds for a fee—but if that fee was not forthcoming, there was a threat that Rob would help himself to a few heads.

Rob was a Jacobite, a follower of the exiled Royal House of Stuart, claimants to the British throne. That gave him a romantic aura, which grew in his later years when he became an outlaw. He became celebrated in

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folklore and myth as a kind of Robin Hood in kilts, fighting against Scotland's English oppressors.

It's a heady, larger-than-life tale, but it has been committed to celluloid only once before. In 1953, Walt Disney tried his hand with Rob Roy: *Highland Rogue*. The movie is somewhat sanitized, as you might expect



Liam Neeson and Jessica Lange star as eighteenth century Scottish folk hero Robert MacGregor and his wife, Mary, in the swashbuckler Rob Roy.

from a 1950s Disney feature, but it does have distinct parallels to the 1995 film.

In the Disney version, Rob (Richard Todd) fights the depredations of the Duke of Montrose, a villain seconded by the evil Captain Killearn. Killearn is a rough parallel to Cunningham, but it's significant that Montrose and Killearn are the culprits, not the English government.

The 1953 movie features impressive battle scenes and was largely filmed on location. Rob Roy gets pardon and justice from King George I, the one person who should be anathema to a Jacobite supporter. But the accent is on action, not subtlety, and the film succeeds as a swashbuckler.

Paramount's *Braveheart* is a whole other bolt of tartan. It too is set in Scotland, but the Scotland of the Middle Ages. Filmed on location like *Rob Roy*, *Braveheart* is a straight historical saga dealing with one of Scotland's national heroes, William Wallace. It's a pet project for Mel Gibson, best known for the Road Warrior movies and the *Lethal Weapon* series. The Australian-American actor not only plays the title character, but produced and directed as well. As Wallace, Gibson sports long tangled hair, a dirty kilt, and (for battle) a blue-painted face. The real Wallace was a knight, but Gibson's wild apparition looks more like ancient Pict than paragon of chivalry.

Most books, even scholarly ones, show Wallace as a typical thirteenth to fourteenth

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century knight. He's usually depicted wearing a helmet, chain mail hauberk, and a sleeveless tunic called a surcoat. Mounted on a caparisoned steed, he's the very image of romance. But *Braveheart* seems to take a different, grubbier tack.

Whatever his appearance, the real Wallace—like his celluloid incarnation—fought a war for Scottish independence against the English between the years 1297-1305. His opponent was King Edward I, ironically the greatest English monarch of the Middle Ages. He was almost a founder of Parliament, a great lawgiver, and a crusader in his youth.

The Gibson film is from the Scottish perspective, where Edward's good qualities are eclipsed by his role as "Hammer of the Scots," a ruthless, conquering soldier. It is true that Edward did some pretty terrible things in Scotland, such as the massacre of the entire town of Berwick. But the production characterizes him as a "ruthless pagan," which is an odd epithet for a former crusader!

The movie also stars actor Patrick McGoohan as King Edward I of England, the man who attempted to subjugate the Scots. McGoohan is no stranger to costume pictures, having appeared in *Mary, Queen of Scots* and Disney TV's *The Scarecrow of Romney Marsh* in the 1960s. He's best known, however, for the cult sci-fi/fantasy series *The Prisoner*.

Location filming was arduous, and *Braveheart* experienced many of the same weather problems as *Rob Roy*. An entire medieval village was constructed in Scotland, which lived up to the old saying, "If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes." Cold, mist, and rain all took their toll, especially when the men were parading around in unaccustomed kilts.

But part of the film was lensed in Ireland, presumably because of the Emerald Isle's lower production costs. The Battle of Stirling Bridge was shot there (a Wallace victory), as well as Falkirk (where he was defeated).

Sir William's heroic stand laid the foundations of Scottish nationalism, but the knight himself was captured and executed. He was the first to suffer the terrible penalty of being hanged, drawn and quartered, a method of execution that was especially devised for him. Wallace's body was then dismembered; parts of his body went to different parts of the kingdom. Will Mel Gibson suffer these atrocities via the magic of special effects? It remains to be seen.

Yet Wallace's death will be child's play compared to the agonies various studio executives will feel if their films aren't successful at the box office. There's a lot riding on *First Knight*, *Rob Roy*, and *Braveheart*. Their success or failure will determine if future films on historical fantasy, adventure, and romance will ever be lensed. But for now, this summer's audiences will be able to enjoy not one but three such films. **A-**

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Native American legends inspire magical fiction, art and music.

IN THE LAST FOLKROOTS COLUMN (REALMS OF FANTASY, APRIL ISSUE), WE BEGAN AN EXPLORATION of fantasy rooted in North American mythology by looking at the legends transplanted to this soil by the immigrant cultures that form our diverse nation. Now, in part two of this exploration, we'll look at magical fiction, art and music inspired by legends native to our soil: the folklore of the first Americans.

These legends are equally diverse, varying among the many tribal peoples who make their home across the huge land mass of North America: Crow, Cree, Blackfoot, Sioux, Oneida, Ojibway, Hopi, Shoshone, Cheyenne, and many others. Yet common themes can be found throughout the stories of many different tribes. Native American legends are often about the land itself: about sacred mountains, salmon-filled rivers, the Great Plains, and the myth-haunted deserts of the West. Animals are prevalent in the tales; they often have human characteristics, intermarry with human beings, or provide the hero with a special power, blessing, or "medicine." Father Earth, Mother Sky, and the Grandfather spirits of the four cardinal directions are an important part of the old myths, as well as of pan-tribal religions. Certain basic characters appear over and over again: the Hero, the Trickster, Grandmother Spider and her grandsons, the Twin Gods of War. While magic is usually invested in the landscape itself or in animal figures like Coyote, one can also find stories similar to the magical fairy

tales of Europe, such as Cherokee legends of little people who live under the hills.

For those interested in the myths themselves, there are many good collections to choose from these days—far too many to name but a handful of favorites here. The Pantheon Fairy Tale & Folklore Library's *American Indian Myths and Legends*, edited by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, is one of the best introductions to this material that I know of. I also recommend William Brandon's *The Magic World*, a collection of magical songs, chants and poems culled from many different tribes. Morning Dove's *Coyote Stories* is a lively, classic source of Trickster tales. Malcolm Margolin's *The Way We Lived* is a terrific collection of stories, songs and reminiscences from tribal peoples of the Pacific coast. Anne Cameron's *Daughters of Copper Woman*, from the Vancouver Islands in Canada, is a fascinating source for women's legends. I also recommend *Giving Birth to Thunder, Sleeping with his Daughter*, by naturalist writer Barry Lopez. In addition, you will find collections of stories specific to individual tribes.

When we look at Native American mythology, it is important to remember that these tales are not the remnants of cultures long buried in the past. They come from living cultures and a traditional way of life still lived by many people in America today—particularly in the Western states. Although some of the stories were created as simple entertainments, the majority of them are teaching stories and religious myths—comparable, in their own context, to the stories of the Judeo-Christian Bible.

It is a startling, little-known fact that until recently there were federal and state laws forbidding the practice of Native American religions. The widespread government policy of taking children away from their own families and shipping them to distant white-run boarding schools, where they are not allowed to speak their own languages, has caused many tales and ceremonies to be lost over the years. Fortunately, these repressive laws have been challenged and are slowly changing (although the Native American Religious Freedom Act has yet to make it through Congress). A cultural renaissance is in progress as young Native Americans reclaim their own rich heritage (quite similar to the renaissance in Celtic myth, language and music that happened in Ireland in the 1970s, challenging the English domination of the cul-

Rites of Passage, from Susan Seddon Boulet's artbook *Shaman: The folklore of the first Americans is alive in Native American culture, art and literature.*



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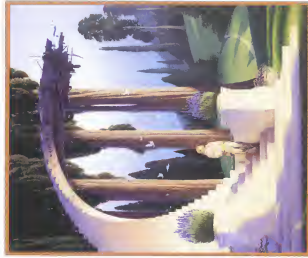


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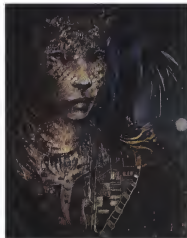
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ture and sparking the folklore/folk music revival that flourishes today). Elderly tribal traditionalists who have been the caretakers of ancient tales and practices are finding



Susan Seddon Boulet's painting Amazonas.

many young people eager now to keep this oral tradition alive.

The dry text of a printed page cannot convey the power of an ancient story told in its proper context. We can only imagine the response of the ancient Greeks or Romans to the myths told in their day. But it is still possible to hear a Lakota legend such as that of White Buffalo Calf Woman just as people may have heard the same tale many generations ago: in the darkness of a sweat lodge, seated cross-legged on the dirt of Mother Earth, hunched beneath the lodge's circular frame of bent willow boughs. In the center of the lodge is a round pit, where the rocks (the Stone People) are brought when they've been heated by a fire. Water is poured on them, and steam fills the small, dark lodge with heat. There are prayers, songs, the sound of drums, the spicy scents of cedar and sage. In between one round of prayers and the next, the door is opened, the *chanupa* (pipe) brought in. And the tale is told of the mysterious woman who brought the first medicine pipe to mankind:

It was a hard winter. Game was scarce, and the People were slowly starving. Two warriors walked out onto the plains and saw a beautiful woman there, wearing a robe of white buffalo skin embroidered with beads. Seeing this woman walking alone, one man had a bad thought about her. "We can have our way with her," he said to the other, "and no one will know." The other warrior disagreed. "We will treat this woman with respect." But the first warrior approached the woman and put out his hand to touch her. As he did so, dust swirled up around him, and when it was gone, nothing remained of the warrior but his bones, picked clean. The woman looked at the other man and said, "Do not be afraid. You have good thoughts and a good heart. You will be a messenger for your People. Tell them I will come

in four days, and bring them a gift from Creator."

In four days, the People gathered together in the largest tipi. The woman in white appeared among them, carrying a bundle. It was a chanupa made of pipestone and wood, with twelve eagle feathers hanging from the stem. She gave it to the People, and she explained, "The smoke of this pipe will carry your prayers directly to Creator. When you hold this pipe, you must speak nothing but the truth, for it is very powerful." She taught them seven sacred ceremonies they would practice with the chanupa, of which the inipi, the sweat lodge, is one. And then she took her leave of the People, saying "Toksha ake wacinyanktin ktelo"—I will see you again.

They all gathered to watch her go, and they saw as she lay down on the ground, rolled, and then stood up again in the shape of a black buffalo calf. She walked a little way and lay down, and this time she was a yellow buffalo calf. She walked a little way and lay down, and this time she was a red buffalo calf. She walked a little way and lay down, and this time she was a white buffalo calf. In this form, she trotted off over the plains and disappeared.

"Her pipe is still with the Lakota people today," the storyteller will conclude, "up in Green Grass, North Dakota. It is very old, very wakan, and only brought out in times of great need." Then he will pass the pipe that he holds, and everyone in the circle will smoke, sending their prayers up to Creator, becoming part of the story....

Across this country, such stories are being told and retold, passed from mouth to mouth: at Sun Dances, in Vision Quests, in the dusk-to-dawn Tipi Meetings of the Native American Church, in Bean Dances and Deer Dances, at inter-tribal powwows. It is because these stories are part of a living culture, rather than historical curiosities from a vanished age, that there is controversy attached to their use as raw material by fiction writers—particularly if those writers are white, using myths that are not their own. This is a controversy that concerns those of us working in the fantasy field, for ours is a literature that routinely draws upon the mythic lore of many cultures. Fantasy writers rarely feel constrained to stick to the myths of their own ethnic makeup. (And using myths from one's own culture can also be a dicey proposition if those myths touch upon religious beliefs—as Salman Rushdie discovered when he wrote *The Satanic Verses*.)

Sherman Alexie, a gifted writer from the Spokane/Coeur d'Alene reservation in Washington, is outspoken in his condemnation of non-Indian writers who assume they can understand and depict the Indian experience. He takes particular exception to the works of Barbara Kingsolver, who often writes about the Cherokee although she is not a tribal member herself. "I read an interview with her [Kingsolver]" says Alexie, "where she says, 'I feel Indian in my bones.' That's bullshit. I'm an Indian and I don't even feel Indian in my bones.... Writers like Kingsolver want to take all the magic out of Indian cul-



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ture without taking any of the loss. In her work we become merely literary devices. She has no vested interest in our lives."

Writers like Alexie are naturally wary of works by non-Indians that serve to perpetuate destructive stereotypes—the literary equivalent of all those awful pastel paintings of Indians one sees on sale throughout the West, painted by whites and sold to whites, in which Indian men and women are merely symbols and not human beings. Yet on the other end of the spectrum of controversy is Tony Hillerman, a white man who has written a popular series of detective novels with Indian protagonists, set on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico/Arizona. Far from decrying his use of their culture in his best-selling fiction, Hillerman has been lauded by the Navajo for his sensitive portrayal of their way of life, and was presented with the Navajo Tribe's Special Friend Award.

I happen to be a fan of Kingsolver and Hillerman both, and while I agree with Alexie that the best work often comes from a writer's own direct experiences, I'd also be loathe to expect all writers to be limited to this. And yet the danger of clumsily working with someone else's sacred beliefs was demonstrated a couple of years ago, when the Hopi tribe in northern Arizona was appalled to discover the revered kachina figures of their religion depicted as the villains of a Marvel comic book. It proved to be the last straw in a series of incidents disrespectful of their ways, and as a result, they closed many of their beautiful dances and ceremonies to non-natives. It was startling to visit the Hopi mesas before and after the comic's publication. The friendliness extended to outside visitors seemed to vanish overnight.

The recent revival of interest (among Indians and non-Indians alike) in traditional Indian ways and beliefs has had the beneficial effect of making fiction, art and music by Indian artists more widely available. Because a good portion of these arts are steeped in the enduring folklore of their cultures, much of it has magical or mythic overtones that will be of interest to fantasy readers. There is also, despite the above controversy, good work to be found by non-Indian artists as well—such as the aforementioned Tony Hillerman, whose mystery novels touch upon Navajo legendry and beautifully evoke the mysticism of the vast Southwestern landscape.

Both Indian and non-Indian writers have contributed to *Tales from the Great Turtle*, a collection of "Fantasy in the Native American Tradition," edited by Richard Gilliam and Piers Anthony. Tales by William Sanders, Jack Dann, Steve Rasnic Tem and Kristine Kathryn Ruch are particularly notable, and while some of the stories are slight, the collection as a whole is a worthy endeavor. Also in the fantasy genre, take a look at Orson Scott Card's *Red Prophet*, Charles de Lint's excellent "Coyote Stories" (in his collection *The Ivory and the Horn*), as well as de Lint's *Spiritwalk*, mixing Native

American and English lore.

It is on the "mainstream" shelves, however, that you will find some of the best of the current fiction inspired by Native American legends. Thomas King is the author of one of my all-time favorite novels, the hilarious *Green Grass, Running Water*, a wild, mythic romp set among the Indians of modern Canada. King's *Medicine River* is also a terrific novel, and his short stories, collected in *One Good Story, That One*, seem to have been written by Trickster himself. I cannot praise King's work too highly. Sherman Alexie describes himself as "a poet who writes fiction to pay the bills," but in fact his fiction is as stunning as his poetry. His short stories have been collected in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fight in Heaven*, which contains several subtly magical pieces along with other more strictly realist works. His poetry collections include *The Business of Fancyspining* and *The First Indian on the Moon*.

Leslie Silko, like Alexie and King, writes about Indian characters caught between traditional and modern worlds. *Ceremony* is about a World War II prisoner of war returning to his Pueblo reservation. The more recent *Almanac of the Dead* is an extraordinary work spanning across Arizona and Mexico, ignoring all such Anglo-drawn borders. N. Scott Momaday is a writer and visual artist who, like Silko, makes his home in Tucson, Arizona and writes about the Southwest. His brilliant novel *House Made of Dawn* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction; his magical novel *Ancient Child* is also recommended. Luci Tapahonso writes movingly about her Navajo family in northern Arizona in her exquisite little book of poems and stories *The Women are Singing*.

Robert J. Conley, a Cherokee, uses the history and legends of his people in the story collection *The Witch of Goingsnake*. Linda Hogan is one of my favorite poets, working with the myths of her Chickasaw ancestors and Native American female spirituality in her absolutely haunting poetry collection, *The Book of Medicines*. Louise Erdrich's novel *Love Medicine* tells a heart-rending story sparked by the death of a Chippewa woman in North Dakota. Susan Power's more recent novel, *The Grass Dancer*, is also set on a reservation in the Dakotas. It is a gorgeous multi-generational saga, magical, beautifully crafted, and highly recommended. Susanna Moore's *Sleeping Beauties* is another of my all-time favorite novels, and uses Native Hawaiian folklore to tell a romantic contemporary tale.

Pawnee writer Anna Lee Walters has created a splendid book of art and text called *The Spirit of Native America: Beauty and Mysticism in American Indian Art*; it is one of the best books on the subject I've seen, modestly priced and handsomely presented. Turning from historic Indian art to modern art, I recommend Fritz Scholder's *30 Years of Sculpture*, recently published by Nazraeli Press. Although best known as a painter (and for

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his association with Georgia O'Keeffe and the Santa Fe school of art), this Indian artist's first collection of sculpture is a revelation and should not be missed. English painter/illustrator Susan Seddon Boulet was raised in South America and heavily influenced by Indian and shamanic imagery. Her visual explorations of shamanism have been published in *Shaman*, by Pomegranate Press. Alicia Austin is an artist known to fantasy readers for her beautiful Celtic-influenced illustrations. In recent years, however, she has begun to explore the mythology native to her own land, in magical paintings such as *Coyote Steals Fire*, which can be viewed in the traveling Dream Weavers exhibition (and in the exhibition catalog). Mark Wagner, a painter whose work accompanied last month's Folkroots column, has worked with Native American imagery and ritual for many years. "I believe that art is sacred and inseparable from life," he says about his work. Wagner's paintings are "focused on the direct connection between nature, spirit, and the human race."

Steve Wall has recently compiled interviews and photographs of Indian women across the country into a terrific book called *Wisdom's Daughters: Conversations with Women Elders of Native America*. For those interested in Native American spirituality and ceremony, the best source is the classic one, *Black Elk Speaks*, which records the basic teachings of a revered Sioux medicine man.

Charles L. Woodward has published a book of conversations with writer/artist N. Scott Momaday, *Ancestral Voice*, an interesting look at Momaday's background and creative process. Gary Snyder works with Native American and naturalist themes in his poetry (such as in his well-known collection *Turtle Island*) and in his nonfiction work *The Practice of the Wild*—a brilliant and inspiring book.

No exploration of art rooted in Native American lore would be complete without a mention of the music being recorded today by talented musicians such as R. Carlos Nakai, a Navajo/Ute master of the Native American flute. These flutes, according to a Brule Sioux legend, were made for one kind of music: love music. A warrior might be too shy to speak to a woman he desired in front of the entire village. So at night he would put all of his desire into the low, moaning cry of the flute, and if the "medicine" was strong in him, the woman would hear his words in the sound, slip from her tipi, and meet him in the dark....

R. Carlos Nakai has recorded several CDs combining traditional flute tunes with haunting music of his own. The result is utterly magical. I particularly recommend *Changes*, *Spirit Horses* *Ancestral Voices* (with William Eaton), and *How the West Was Lost* (the soundtrack from the PBS documentary). Nakai also plays in the band Jackalope, which adds rock and jazz rhythms to this material. Bill Miller, of the Stockbridge-Munsee tribe, is a singer/songwriter who

combines traditional and original tunes; his *Red Road* is a powerful, wonderful CD. Sharon Burch has created original songs from the traditional music of her Navajo ancestry on her beautiful CD *Yazzie Girl*. Robbie Robertson (of The Band) and the Red Road Ensemble have recorded *Music for the Native Americans*, which is actually music for anyone who likes rhythms to be found at the intersection of traditional music and rock-and-roll.

At a recent concert, R. Carlos Nakai (decked out in traditional braids and beaded shirt—along with blue jeans and running shoes) complained about the term Native American. "We're all Native Americans," he says; "all of us who were born on this land; all of us who attempt to share it with greater and lesser efforts at harmony." When Europeans first came to these shores, they demanded native peoples adapt to their ways (when they weren't wiping them out altogether). Now many of us are doing what those early settlers should have done back then: listening to the people who know this land best, learning its ways, its own history. Blood and culture have intermingled over the generations since those first settlers came. It is the task of the next generations to find strength in this, instead of divisiveness. One step in that process is to listen to legends and stories of the first Americans, for these myths are the heart and voice of the land that is now home to us all. ♣

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BOOKS

Continued from page 14

is best, really, if the environment is downright cozy, and if the characters are so well-ensconced in their little world that they are a little smug about it, if not even a little bored with its dependability.

Then, that done, we bring in the first chill draft, the premier nighttime rattling of the back door, the initial tiny—but growing—suspicion that the ground underfoot may not be anywhere near as solid as we always thought it was, or that we know the layout of the basement quite as well as we heretofore believe we did.

This is skillfully composed on two levels by Ms. Boyle in her book, first by the developing realization on the part of her heroine, the newlywed Emily Wakelin, a professional embroiderer and a painter of considerable talent, that the ancient mansion which looms over the charming cottage which she and her accountant husband, John, have just acquired is haunted, and horribly haunted, at that.

She has come to that conclusion because, on a visit to the mansion to visit its slightly eerie owners, the formidable Lady Abigail and her slowly dying husband, the profoundly embittered George Curran, she has been, literally, touched by the ghost. She has not seen it, she has *felt* it, in the high, horrip-



Colin Sullivan's haunting cover for *Holy Terror*.

ilating tradition of M.R. James' tactile haunts...and it has felt her!

The second level, and this is the really clever, insidious bit about the book, is that both she and her husband, and everyone else in Little Hocking—which is the touching name of the perfect bit of Essex where all this takes place—not to mention everyone else in the whole wide world who is possessed (I use the word simultaneously both in its pas-

sive and active form) of and by a television set, are becoming steadily more and more terrified thanks to their daily haunting by the Gulf War's inexorable materialization.

Both these grim presences continue to grow in importance and come closer, and their subtly conjoined menaces nibble more and more from the walls and foundations of the Wakelin's comfy little world. Then, in sinister cooperation with the other haunting, the war plucks Emily's accountant husband from her side to defend a client accused of illegal dealings with Saddam's army, leaving her all alone to deal with the intensifying attentions of what now seems to be more than one increasingly frightening ghost.

There is a clever and multilayered mystery surrounding the identity of that ghost, or those ghosts, which is complicatedly involved with the labyrinthine history of Curran House (which is spookily reflected in its heterogeneous architecture, the menace varies as you go from zone to zone) and a sinister episode in the distant past of Little Hocking involving the martyrdom by burning of Walter Tappett, a one-time cleaner of latrines whose blunt honesty got him tied to the stake for heresy, which eventually turned him into a Protestant saint.

Emily is dragged willy-nilly ever deeper into all of this by the irresistible will of Lady Abigail, who grew up in another house filled with ghosts and is chillingly unable to comprehend why anyone of any sense could be

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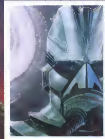
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seriously upset by one of the things, and by the absolutely dreadful Mrs. Witherly-Boshe, who heads the Saint Mary Magdalen Church Needlework Committee and who will not leave her be until she designs and sews them a suitable wall hanging of Saint Walter to be displayed in a newly refurbished niche.

There is much humor and wry observation in Ms. Boyle's book. I was particularly taken with her deady accurate descriptions of children, one loutish youth she calls the "stone boy" in particular, and I very much enjoyed her lovely delineations of the various sorts of eccentrics which unfortunately only seem to grow in Britain. The more than slightly foggy Reverend Desmond Leigh, vicar of Saint Mary Magdalen's, is one such, and Simon and Jeremy Curran, the iron-nerved male offspring of Lady Abigail and George, are two others. The grim infighting of the ladies of the Needlework Committee is continually delightful throughout, which does not stop it from being occasionally, now and then, very touching. Ms. Boyle is good at delineating small braveries.

I think I've managed to avoid giving away any main surprises of this book and hope I've managed to intrigue you enough to go out and get it and read it, because if you happen to enjoy this kind of thing, which I certainly do, I think you'll find it to be a first rate example of its genre and not to be missed.

And now I'll see if I can't scout up those other works of hers.

Gahan Wilson

ful woman with knowledge of the ancient "magic"—plus an uncanny ability to receive a premonition. Her relationship with the king changes their lives, and the lives of all who live in Meriga, as *Daughter of Prophecy* chronicles their tale of power and tragedy.

Anne Kelleher Bush has created a wonderful and richly textured world, weaving together fantasy, science, history, politics, war, and even a few ancient folk songs! She also manages to raise her tale above the clichés of many first novels. For instance, I was deeply moved by her development of Phineas, the Captain of the King's Guards, into a man who must struggle with his conscience and values as Aberlard continues his single-minded pursuit of domination.

Still, this is not a perfect book. The author's skill at developing her story was not consistently matched by the quality of her writing. I was especially irked by the all-too-frequent descriptions of romantic (or lustful) encounters, which sounded more like a Harlequin Romance than a tale of alternative fiction. I also wish the publishers had given Ms. Bush more room to fully develop all of her fascinating characters, as she did so well with Phineas.

But these are minor quibbles about a fine novel. Most lovers of fantasy (and other genres, too) will enjoy *Daughter of Prophecy* as much as I did. They will also be pleased that the developments of the final chapters lay a clear foundation for future sequels. I can only hope that Anne Kelleher Bush will soon match her fine debut with more stories about living in Meriga. Please don't make us wait too long!

Dan Silver

Daughter of Prophecy, by Anne Kelleher Bush (Warner Books, NY, 357 pp., paperback, \$5.50).

How should I describe *Daughter of Prophecy*? As a fantasy story? A tale of speculative science? A future history novel? A bodice-ripping romance? Perhaps "all of the above" would sum up this entertaining debut from author Anne Kelleher Bush.

The story is set in twenty-eighth century America—or "Meriga," as it is known. There have been a few changes to our nation! For instance, it appears that California did fall into the sea, and waterfront property is now available in "Lost Vegas, Vada." There is also a North Sea where Canada once lay, and the king's capital is located in the midwest city of "Agha."

Yes, I said "the king." King Abeldar Ride-nau, that is, who is trying to reunite a nation torn by the destructive warfare of the past "Armageddon." The nation of Meriga is a patchwork of fiefdoms and suffering towns, torn and tortured by marauding horsemen known as "Harleyriders" and the armies of competing lords.

It is also a land that has forgotten many of the ancient technologies, and the population fears the powers of mutants and "witches," who may retain some vestiges of scientific knowledge. In fact, the story begins when King Abeldar prevents a local priest from burning a "witch" in a small village. The alleged witch, Nydia Farhallen, is a beauti-

Sword and Sorceress XII, edited by Marion Zimmer Bradley (DAW, July 1995, 347 pp., paperback, \$4.99).

In the latest anthology of this heroic fantasy series you'll find twenty-two original stories from authors you know: Mercedes Lackey, Diane L. Paxson, Jennifer Roberson, Elisabeth Waters, and Deborah Wheeler (see another of her stories in this issue of *Realms of Fantasy*). There are also several stories by authors you'll soon get to know.

In Marion Zimmer Bradley's introduction, she discusses how to write fantasy stories. This captured my attention after noting Shawna's editorial in this issue. Marion advises young writers to stay out of college creative writing classes and stick to reading the best fantasy stories. By reading the best you can teach yourself to write. Write your own work and submit it to your favorite publication. Keep submitting and revising your work over and over and "develop a professional and undiscouragable attitude."

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by Janny Wurts



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Wizard of the Owls is the cover for Janny Wurts' forthcoming short story collection *That Way Lies Camelot*, to be published by HarperPrism, December 1995. It first appeared as a cover to *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine* in 1992, receiving the Chesley Award from the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists (ASFA) for Best Cover Illustration.

"Wizard of the Owls poses the question: what if we co-existed and nurtured our earthly inheritance, rather than seek ever to dominate? What mysteries might be ours for the sharing?"

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*Some paths demand that they be walked, and walk you must,
no matter where they take you.*

BREAD CRUMBS & STONES

BY LISA GOLDSTEIN

Illustration by Paul Salmon

MY SISTER AND I GREW UP ON FABULOUS STORIES. Night after night we would listen, spellbound, as my mother talked of kings and queens, of quests through magical lands, of mythical beasts and fantastic treasure and powerful wizards. As I got older I realized that these were not the tales my friends and classmates were hearing: my mother was making them up, piecing them together from a dozen different places.

She seemed like a queen herself, tall and pale, a woman made of ivory. When I was a child I was sure she was the most beautiful person I knew. Yet she changed when she went outside the house, when she had to deal with grocers and policemen and bank tellers. Her store of words dried up and she spoke only in short, formal phrases. Her accent, nearly nonexistent at home, grew worse. But she never lost her grace or became awkward. It seemed instead as if she changed like one of the heroes of her stories, turned from a living woman into a statue.

This story is reprinted with permission. "Bread Crumbs & Stones" copyright 1983 by Lisa Goldstein from *Stone White Blood Red*

I rarely thought about my childhood. But now, as we waited at the hospital, my father, my sister and I, all these things went through my mind. My mother's condition was the same, the nurse had told us: she was sleeping peacefully. There was no reason for us to stay.

We stayed, I guess, because we couldn't think of anywhere else to go. "They've got her in a room with a terminal patient, a woman who's had three operations so far," my father said. He was angry and on edge; every few minutes he would stand and pace to the soda machine. "What kind of atmosphere is that for her?"

My sister Sarah and I said nothing. Was our mother a terminal patient, too? We knew only that she had been in and out of the hospital, and that her illness had been diagnosed at least a year before my father told us about it. There were so many things we did not say in our family; we had grown used to mystery.

Finally Sarah stood up. "There's nothing we can do here," she said. "I'm going home."

"I'll go with you," I said quickly.

Sarah lived in a one-room apartment in the Berkeley hills. She had a couch that turned into a bed and a wall of bookshelves and stereo equipment, and very little else. She made us some tea on a hot plate and we sat on the couch and sipped it, saying nothing.

"Do you think she's been happy, Lynne?" Sarah asked finally.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, if she's—I don't think she's got much longer. Do you think it was all worth it? Did she have a good life? Did we treat her all right?"

"I don't know. No, I do know. She always tried to be cheerful for us, but there was something—something she kept hidden. I don't know what it was." We had been talking about her in the past tense, I noticed, and I resolved to stop.

"Was it us?"

"I don't think so." I thought of our father, an American soldier she had met after the war. Did she ever regret marrying such an ordinary man? "Maybe it was—maybe it's Dad. She felt she made a bad marriage."

"Maybe it was something about the war," Sarah said.

WE HAD ASKED, OF course, what had happened to her in the war. She had been born in Germany, but her parents had managed to place her with a Christian family and get her forged papers saying she was not Jewish. She looked like what the Nazis had considered Aryan, tall and blond, so the deception had not been difficult. She had worked in a glass-blowing factory, making vacuum tubes. Her parents had been sent to a concentration camp and had died there; we had never known our grandparents.

"Maybe," I said.

"Do you ever think—I sometimes wonder if I could have survived something like that. When I was twelve I thought, This is the age my mother was when she went to live with the foster family. And at sixteen I thought, This is when she started at the factory..."

"No," I said, surprised. She had never told me any of this.

"And what happened to our grandparents. I think about that all the time, that something terrible is going to happen. That's why I don't have any furniture, because at the back of my mind—at the back of my mind I always think, What if I have to flee?"

"To flee?" Perhaps it was the unusual word that made me want to laugh, and that, I knew, would have been unforgivable.

"She hardly told us anything. I used to imagine—the most horrible things."

"You shouldn't think of things like that. She had it better than most."

"But why didn't she tell us about it? Everything I know about her life I heard from Dad."

"Because—Because she had to be secretive in order to survive, and she never got over it," I said. I had never spoken about any of this before, had not known I knew it. "Once when I was a kid, and we were in some crowded place—I think it was an airport—I tried to get her attention. I kept calling, 'Mom, Mom,' and she wouldn't look at me. And finally I said, 'Hey, Margaret Jacobi,' and she turned around so fast... I thought she was going to hit me. She said, 'Don't ever mention my name in a public place.'"

"I know. And she would never fill out the census. She hid it away that one time, remember, and a man came to the door..."

"And she wouldn't talk to him. He kept threatening her with all these terrible things—"

"And then Dad came home, thank God, and he answered it."

"I thought they were going to take her away to jail, at least."

I was laughing now, a little nervously, hoping I could make Sarah forget her terrible thoughts. But then she said, "Why do these things happen?"

"What things?"

"You know. Cancer and concentration camps."

But I had no idea. Why did she have to ask such uncomfortable questions? The best I could do was change the subject and hope she would forget about it.

THE NEXT WEEK MY FATHER called and told me that my mother had asked for me. I hurried to the hospital and met him and Sarah at her bedside. But by the time I got there her eyes were closed; she seemed to be asleep.

"They had to give her a shot—she was in a lot of pain," my father said. "They told me she was getting better." He seemed barely able to contain his anger at the doctors who had given him hope. I could see that he needed to hold someone responsible, and I understood; I felt the same way myself.

My mother stirred and said something. "Shhh," I said to my father. "Did you feed the dog?" my mother asked softly. We hadn't had a dog in years. "Did you—" she said again, her voice growing louder.

"It's OK, Mom," I said. "Don't worry."

"Good," she said. "Sit down. I'll tell you a story if you like, but you'll have to be quiet."

We said nothing. Her eyes opened but did not focus on any of us. "The princess came to the dark fortress," she said. Her accent was very strong, the "th" sound almost a "d." "It was locked, and she didn't have the key. Did I tell you this story before?"

She had told us so many over the years that I couldn't remember. "No, Mom," I said softly.

"I'll tell you another one," she said. "They went to the woods." She stopped, as if uncertain how to go on.

"Who did?" I said.

"The children," she said. "Their parents took them to the woods and left them there. Their father was a poor woodcutter, and he didn't have enough to feed them."

To my amazement I realized that she was telling the story of Hansel and Gretel. She had never, as I said, told us conventional fairy tales; I think she considered the Grimms too German, and she avoided all things German after the war.

"The woodcutter's wife had convinced him to leave the children

in the woods. But the children had brought along stones, and they dropped them as they walked. The woodcutter told his children that he and his wife would go on a little ways and cut wood, and they left the children there. The children went to sleep, and when they awoke it was dark. But they followed the stones back, and so they came home safely."

I hadn't ever heard this part. The way I knew it Hansel and Gretel had dropped bread crumbs. But all fairy tales were hazy to me; I had trouble, for example, remembering which was Snow White and which was Sleeping Beauty.

"The woodcutter was pleased to see his children, because he had felt bad about leaving them in the woods. But his wife, the children's stepmother, soon began to complain about not having enough food in the house. Once again she tried to convince her husband to take the children to the woods. And after a while he agreed, in order to have peace in the house."

"The children overheard their parents talking, as they had done the last time, and they went to gather stones again. But this time the door to the back was locked."

She closed her eyes. I thought she had fallen asleep and I felt relieved: her story had made me uncomfortable. "The door was locked," my mother said quietly, one last time.

WHEN I THINK OF THAT summer I see my sister and me in her apartment in the hills, sitting on her couch and sipping tea. She was an elementary school teacher on summer vacation, and I had taken a leave of absence from my job to be available to my mother. By unspoken agreement we started going to her place whenever we left the hospital. We were trying to understand something, but since we weren't sure what it was, since our parents had chosen to reveal only parts of the mystery at a time, we had long, circular conversations without ever getting anywhere. It was the closest we had been since childhood.

"What happened to Hansel and Gretel?" I asked Sarah. "The children drop bread crumbs instead of stones the next time, and the birds eat the bread crumbs so they can't find their way back, and then—"

"Then they meet the witch," Sarah said. "I've read it to the kids at school hundreds of times."

"And the witch tries to—to cook them—"

"To cook Hansel. Oh my God, Lynne, she was talking about the ovens. The ovens in the camps."

"Oh, come on. She'd never even seen them."

"No, but her parents had. She must have been trying to imagine it."

"That's too easy. It was the children who were threatened with the oven in the story, not the parents. And just because you try to imagine it doesn't mean everyone else does."

"I used to think they looked like those ovens in the pizza parlor. Remember? They took us there a lot when we were kids. Long rows of shelves, black and hot. I wondered what it would be like to have to get into one."

I thought of the four of us, sitting in a darkened, noisy pizza parlor, laughing at something one of us had just said. And all the while my little sister Sarah had been watching the ovens, imagining herself burning.

"Don't tell me you never thought of it," she said.

"No, not really."

"You're kidding. It happened. We have to face the fact that it happened."

"Yeah, but we don't have to dwell on it."

"How can you ignore—"

"Ok, I'll tell you what I think. If I had survived something like that, the camps, or having been in hiding, I would be grateful. I would think each day was a miracle, really. It would be a miracle to be alive."

"And what about the people who died? The survivors feel guilty just for being alive."

"How do you know?"

"I have books about it. Do you want to see what the ovens looked like?" She stood and headed toward her bookshelves, and I saw, alarmed, that she had a whole shelf of books on the concentration camps.

"No, I don't."

She stopped but did not sit back down. "What must that be like, not to have a home?"

"She does have a home. It's here with us."

"You know what I mean. A whole generation was wiped out, a whole community. All their traditions and stories and memories and customs."

"She has stories—"

"But she made them all up. She doesn't even have stories of her own—she forgot all the ones her parents told her."

"Come on—those were great stories. Don't you remember?"

"That's not the point. She'd lost everything. Dad was always having to tell her about Jewish holidays and customs. She'd forgotten it all."

"She remembered Hansel and Gretel," I said, and for once Sarah had no answer.

A FEW DAYS LATER MY FATHER called to tell me that my mother was better. She would stay in the hospital for more tests, but he thought that she would be going home soon. I was surprised at the news; at the back of my mind I had been certain she would never return. Perhaps I had absorbed some of Sarah's pessimism.

The day she came home I invited the family over for dinner. My place was larger than Sarah's, with a dining table and dishes and silverware that matched. Still, when I looked around the apartment to make sure everything was ready, I realized I had pared down my life as much as my sister had. I had no close friends at the software company where I worked, I had never dated any man for longer than six months, and I had not lived with anyone since moving away from my family. I never discussed politics or gave my opinion on current events. In Berkeley, California, perhaps the most political city in the United States, I had never put a bumper sticker on my car, or worn a campaign button, or come out for one candidate over another. These things were no one's business but my own.

I had even, I saw now, started to drift away from Sarah. My sister's words came back to me, but they weren't very funny this time: What if I have to flee?

My parents had dressed up for dinner, as if they were going to a party. My mother wore an outfit I remembered, a violet-gray suit, a gray silk blouse and a scarf of violet gauze, but it was far too large on her. Her skin was the gray-white color of ashes, and her blue veins stood out sharply on her neck and the insides of her wrists. I had seen her in the hospital and was not shocked at the changes; instead I felt pity, and a kind of squeamish horror at what she was going through.

I don't remember much of that dinner, really, just that my mother ate little, and that we all made nervous conversation to avoid the one

thing uppermost in our minds. And that my mother said she wanted to hike through Muir Woods, a favorite spot of hers. Sarah and I quickly volunteered to take her, both of us treating her request as the last wish of a dying woman. As, for all we knew, it was.

IT WAS SUNNY THE DAY I DROVE MY sister and mother across the San Rafael Bridge to Marin County and up into Mount Tamalpais. The road wound up past the dry, bleached grass of the mountainside. Then, as we went higher, this began to give way to old shaded groves of eucalyptus and redwood. Light shot through the branches and scattered across the car.

We parked at the entrance to Muir Woods. It was a weekday and so the place was not too crowded, though the tourists had come out in force. We went past the information booth and the cafeteria, feeling a little smug. We did not need information because we knew the best places to hike, and we had packed a lunch.

There is a well-worn circular trail through the woods that brings you back to the parking lot, and there are paths that branch off from this trail, taking you away from the crowds. We chose one of these paths and began to hike through the trees. Squares and lozenges of light fell over us. The ground was patterned in the green and brown and gold of damp leaves and twigs and moss. We could hear a brook somewhere beneath us, but as we climbed higher up the mountain the sound faded and we heard only the birds, calling to one another.

After a while my mother began to lag behind, and Sarah and I stopped, pretending we were tired. We sat on a rock and took out the sandwiches. When I gave my mother hers I brushed against her hand; her skin was as cold as glass. We ate in silence for a while.

"There's no good way to say this, I suppose," my mother said. Sarah and I stopped eating and looked up, watchful as deer. "You children had an uncle. My brother."

Whatever revelation we were expecting, it was not this one. "You would have liked him, I think," my mother said. "He loved children—he would have spoiled you both rotten. His name was Johann."

Uncle Johann, I thought. It sounded as distant as a character in a novel. "What happened to him?" Sarah asked.

"We were both adopted by a Christian family," my mother said, and I saw that for once she would not need prompting to tell this story, that she had probably rehearsed it over and over in her mind. "You remember, the one I told you about. And then when we were old enough we began to work in the factory, making the vacuum tubes. Once I dropped some of the liquid glass on my foot—molten glass, is that the right word? I still have the scar there." She pointed to her right foot. The scar, which I had never noticed, was hidden by the hiking shoe.

"Everyone laughed, I suppose because I was new at the work, and so clumsy. But Johann came to my side immediately and put towels soaked in cold water on the burn."

She did not look at either of us as she spoke. It was as if she was compelled to tell the story to its end, without stopping. Yet her voice was level and calm, and I could not help but think that she might as well be telling us one of her fabulous stories.

Johann was a little hotheaded, I think. At home he would talk about sabotage, about making vacuum tubes that didn't work or even about blowing up the factory, though I don't know where he would have gotten the dynamite. He talked about his connections in the Underground. We were together nearly all the time, in the factory and at home, and I knew that he had no connections. But I could not help worrying about him—the Germans were taking younger and younger men into the army as the war began to turn against

them, and I knew that soon it would be Johann's turn.

"Near the end of the war, as more and more young men were drafted, the Germans brought in prisoners from the labor camps to work in the factory. We knew that these prisoners were probably Jews, and it made Johann angry to see how they were treated—they had to work longer hours than we did and had less to eat at the midday break. He wanted to do something for them, to contact them in some way.

"We got into arguments about it. You must understand that we hardly ever talked to our fellow workers for fear of giving ourselves away, and so the only company we had was each other. We had become like two prisoners who had shared the same cell for far too long—for a time we could not say anything without giving offense.

"I told him I thought these prisoners were better off than the ones in the camps, because by this time we had begun to hear terrible rumors about what went on in those places. I said that he could do nothing for them, that he would only raise their hopes if he went to talk to them, and that he would be putting himself in danger for nothing. And I pointed out that they didn't speak German anyway—they seemed to be mostly Hungarians and Poles.

"As I said, we couldn't speak to each other without causing pain. He called me a coward. He said—oh, it was horrible—he said that I had lived among the Germans for so long that I had begun to think like one, that I believed myself superior to these people. And—and he said more, too, of a similar nature."

IT NOTICED THAT MY MOTHER HAD said it was horrible, but that her expression and her tone still did not change. And that she did not stop telling her story but continued on as calmly as though she were reading it from a book. Her fingers picked at the sandwich, dropping pieces of it on the ground.

"So I didn't speak to him for a week. I had only my foster parents to speak to, and I—well, I was an adolescent, with an adolescent's certain, impatient opinions about the world, and I had started to hate my adopted family. They were Germans, weren't they? And so at least partly responsible for this war and the dreadful things that were happening. I had heard the remarks my fellow workers made about the Jews at the factory, and I thought my foster parents must feel the same way. So what if they had saved my life, and my brother's life? Perhaps I hated them for that, too, for their courage and generosity.

"Was Johann right? I don't know. We might have been able to help these people, but I can't think how. Perhaps if everyone who felt the way my brother did had done something—I don't know.

"We used to walk each other home when our shift ended, but now I started going home by myself. I couldn't bring myself to speak to anyone. I felt that I was alone, that no one understood me. The war might not have existed, I was so deeply buried within myself.

"There was a young man at the factory, a German, who began to watch me as I worked, who always seemed to be next to me when I turned around. I thought he was a spy, that he knew my secret. You children, oh, you've lived such a pampered life—you have no idea what we went through. We had to suspect everyone, everyone. Then one of the women who worked near me said, 'I think Franz is in love with you.'

"Of course I hated him—I don't have to tell you that. He was a German. It's strange, isn't it? We had such strong feelings about each other, and we had never spoken a word together.

"When he saw that Johann and I had stopped walking home together he started to wait for me at the end of my shift. I tried everything I could to avoid him, but some days it just wasn't possible. I

was terrified that he would make some remark about the Jews working in the factory, and that I would not be able to contain myself and somehow give myself away. After a week of this I was desperate to make up with Johann again, to have everything the way it had been before. I hadn't forgotten what he had said to me, but I had convinced myself that it didn't matter. Well, you've been adolescents too—you know how quickly you can change your feelings about something.

"I managed to avoid Franz, and I waited outside the factory when my shift ended. But Johann didn't come out. Soon all my fellow workers had gone home, and the new shift had started, and I still didn't see Johann. I went back inside.

DID I EVER TELL YOU WHAT the factory looked like? It looked like hell. Whenever people say anything about hell I always nod, because I know what they're talking about. The place was huge, with low ceilings and almost no light to work by, just the yellow flames of the gas jets. It was hot in winter and like a furnace in summer, with everyone's jet on all the time. We dipped into the big vats of liquid glass and blew our tubes, and that was all we did, eight and nine hours a day. We were allowed to sit down only at the midday meal.

"At first I couldn't find Johann at all. Then I saw that he was walking over to the part of the factory where the Jews worked, and that when the guard looked away he passed a note to one of the prisoners. The other man read it and then turned on his jet of fire and burned it. And neither of them had looked at the other.

"Johann grinned when he saw me and said, 'It's all taken care of.' I wondered what he meant, but I was so glad he was talking to me again that I didn't really care. And maybe he had been right; maybe he could do something for these people.

"When we left the factory I saw that I hadn't gotten rid of Franz after all—he was waiting for me at the door to the factory, and he was smiling, as if he knew something. Had he seen Johann? But I felt something of my brother's confidence, and I put Franz out of my mind until the next day.

"Franz sat next to me during the midday break. 'What is your brother doing?' he asked.

"What do you mean?" I said. I am a very poor liar; I had always dreaded the thought of someone, anyone, asking me questions.

"I saw him the other day talking to the Jews," Franz said. To this day I cannot stand to hear a German say the word 'Jew'—'Jude,' they say, in that horrible accent."

She did not seem to realize that that "horrible accent" was her own as well. I said nothing.

"What was wrong with Johann? Franz asked. He leaned closer to me and raised his voice at the same time. I was desperate to ask him to speak quietly but I could say nothing, or his suspicions would fall on me. Was Johann a Jew-lover? Some kind of spy?

"I felt battered by his questions. He became more offensive. Why did I never leave my brother's side? Was I in love with him? Was I a Jew-lover as well? If I knew something about my brother's activities I had better go to the authorities and tell them, hadn't I?

"Then he said something I have thought about every day of my life. 'I might just go to the authorities with what I know,' he said.

"What do you mean?" I said. 'Don't be stupid. He hasn't done anything.'

"Good," Franz said. 'You'll stop me, won't you?'

"It's obvious to me today that he wanted to—to blackmail me. That he wanted me to walk home with him, or he would report Johann. And probably he wanted more as well, wanted sex, though

I tried not to think of that at the time. I was young, and very sheltered, and even the thought of having to speak to him made me shudder with disgust. So I convinced myself that that could not be what he meant, and that he had no proof against Johann. And, for all I knew, Johann had not done anything. So I avoided Franz, and a week passed, and I began to relax.

"Only once in all that time did Franz try to contact me. He walked by me and gave me a note, and I burned it without reading it. I thought that that would tell him I wanted nothing more to do with him, and that he would leave us alone.

"But the next day when we came to work the prisoner who had gotten Johann's note was gone. Johann noticed it first, and I felt him become stiff with fear beside me, terrified to go to his place in the factory. 'What?' I said. 'What is it?'

"You don't know anything about anything," Johann said. 'Don't worry, I'll tell them that.'

"What's happened?" I said, but at that moment three men in the uniform of the Gestapo came into the factory, and Johann began to run. One man guarded the door, so the only place Johann could go was up the stairs. There were several floors above us—I think they were offices—but we were not allowed to go off the first floor and so I had never seen them. Johann must have run as far as he could go, until he was trapped, and then they brought him back down—"She was crying now, but her expression still had not changed. She wiped at her eye with her hand. 'I saw him on a Red Cross list after the war. He had died in Auschwitz.'

Sarah and I said nothing. We were not a family used to confidences, to strong emotion. I wondered how my mother could have kept this story from us for so many years, and what I could possibly say to her. And I remembered Sarah's question—"Do you think she was happy?"—and I thought that nothing could be more irrelevant to her life.

"Does Dad know?" Sarah asked finally.

"I think so," my mother said.

You think so? I thought, horrified. How had she told him? With hints and misdirection, just as she had always answered our questions, until finally he suspected the worst? But my mother had become silent. We would get no more stories today. For the first time, I thought she looked very old.

WE BEGAN TO WALK back. Had Gretel, I wondered, come back to the forest with her daughter? Many years later, when she was an old woman and tired of secrets, had she taken her daughter by the hand and followed the old path? What could she have said to her?

"This is where our parents left us, in that clearing by the brook. And here's where we saw the cottage. Look there—the trees have come and claimed it. And this is where the oven was, this place where all the leaves seem burnt and dry. We saw these things when we were young, too young, I guess, and all we knew was terror. But there were miracles too, and we survived. And look—here is the path that you can take yourself."

It seemed to me that all my life my mother had given me the wrong story, her made-up tales instead of Hansel and Gretel, had given me bread crumbs instead of stones. That she had done this on purpose, told me the gaudiest, most wonder-filled lies she knew, so that I would not ask for anything more and stumble on her secret. It was too late now—I would have to find my own way back. But the path did not look at all familiar. ■

*Sometimes the old tales just missed
the subtleties.*

THORNS

BY MARTHA WELLS

Illustration by Todd Lockwood

COMING DOWN THE STAIRS TO dinner, I found the governess engaged in battle with my great-great-grandnephew. The disgusting little boy was wrestling with the poor woman, apparently trying to thrust her over the banister.

"An application of the birch rod would settle that, Miss," I said.

"I would dearly love to, Madame," the governess answered, breathless and more sharply than her wont. Perhaps the struggle to preserve her life—we were on the third landing, and the stone-flagged floor of the Hall was far below—had helped her to overcome her usual reticence. "But I've been instructed to use only





modern methods of disciplining the children...."

The unruly creature's mother, my great-grandniece Electra, was hurrying up the stairs toward them, her satin skirts rustling like storm wind. She dithered near the struggle, waving her plump soft hands. "Oh, Malcolm, you mustn't treat Miss Grey so!"

I smiled grimly. Modern ideas. Such notions had succeeded in making the already over-indulged children a terror to the servants and the rest of the household. But Electra has always had a soft heart.

The boy obligingly released his governess and, with a triumphant grin, stooped to seize her workbag, which had fallen to the carpet. I had no doubt he meant to thrust it over the banister in her place. I lost patience and seized the creature by the ear. He desisted with an alarmed shriek—I'm old, but my fingers are strong. It was an effort not to squeeze too hard. We have cousins who are maddened by the scent of a child's blood in the air, or the sight of the dew of perspi-

"I see," Electra dismissed the man and looked to me, her mild dove eyes vaguely troubled. "Oh, dear. A prince."

"It has been a long time," I said. But I've dealt with such before.

"Oh, dear."

Dinner was delayed until the duke's retinue were settled and he himself had changed for dinner. He had brought with him only two rather rascally appearing servants and a valet who would have looked more at home in a cavalry troop. But in this day and age royalty, especially foreign royalty, is permitted to travel at will and without ostentation.

Through gentle prying among the servants, I ascertained that Duke Carl Kohler had been in correspondence with Electra's husband over some matter of local history of which Dearing pretended an expert knowledge. His arrival had still been unexpected, how-

"Yes, there's a tale of a great house age trapped within the forest by caused the thorns to appear. It's

ration on a downy cheek. It makes them inconvenient guests at family gatherings. Of course, one can't eat one's own great-grand-nephews, however deliberate the provocation.

Electra simpered and said, "Oh, dear, Malcolm, you must learn not to be naughty. Naughty boys die and are sent to Hell."

"Some more precipitously than others," I added, thinking of the deep well at the bottom of the garden.

Taking my action as tacit permission to apply mild force, the governess seized the creature's other ear as I released my grip, and herded her charge up the stairs.

We continued down, Electra fluttering at my side. "Auntie, you know Malcolm is really a little dear...."

"I know nothing of the kind." Electra is a small woman, for our family; her wispy blond head reaches only to my shoulder. Her figure is plump and requires a corset to keep its shape, and her eyes are mild and her face cherubic. An odd pair we would seem to outsiders' eyes, for I am grown thin and cadaverous with the long passage of years, and my features were always rather sharp.

"Now, Auntie...."

We reached the landing above the Hall. Below, Electra's husband, Mr. John Dearing, was personally receiving a guest, a young man in the act of handing his greatcoat to the butler.

There were no guests expected, and just before the dinner hour is not considered an appropriate time for casual calls, yet Dearing was greeting this presumptuous fellow as a prodigal son.

He was a striking figure. (The guest, I mean. Dearing is a stout, bewhiskered muskrat of a man, a fit mate for Electra.) Blond curls, broad shoulders, a chiseled profile. I felt a feather of unease travel down my spine; old instincts rousing, perhaps. His garments, though somewhat the worse for travel at this rainy time of year, were of fashionable cut and fine cloth.

Frowning, Electra caught the attention of one of the footmen stationed at the bottom of the stairs and called him up to her to ask, "Why, William, whoever is that?"

"Madame, they say it's a foreign duke, the son of the king of Armantia."

ever. I liked it not. A battle at my age is not the stirring prospect that it was when I was twenty and in the fullness of my power. I had hoped to wane here in peace, watching the remains of the family bicker and occasionally amusing myself with the requests of the local peasantry, many of whom followed the old ways and remembered my existence.

At table I made sure to be seated where I could observe our illustrious guest without the monstrous bulk of the *étagère* blocking my view and listened to such talk as passed for conversation among the others present. Several of Dearing's brothers and nephews were with us tonight; they were all flattered by the duke's condescension and were intent on making perfect asses of themselves. Kohler's smile was ready and his accent was barely discernible; he had, I believe, been educated in this country. I felt our guest's eyes on me with more frequency than quite right—I was no longer the kind of woman young men stared at.

It wasn't until the last course was cleared that the reason for this visit was aired. As Dearing, who fancied himself something of an amateur historian, came to the end of a tiresome monologue on the age of the parish church, Kohler leaned forward and said, "That is fascinating, but the subject that I truly wanted to consult you on was the legends concerning the Great Thorn Forest. I'm thinking of making a study of it myself."

Electra had been consuming wine and, at this point, gave vent to a most unladylike snort. As her dinner companions were compelled to come to her aid and the attention of the table was momentarily distracted, I said, "Are you really? I would never have guessed."

He turned the dazzling smile on me, and I saw I had not imagined the wary suspicion in the depths of his blue eyes. He said, "I am, Madame. Would you be able to assuage my curiosity?"

"If I could, I dare say I wouldn't. We all know the danger of curiosity."

"And is the Great Thorn Forest very dangerous, Madame?" he pounced.

Electra had sufficiently recovered, and the others were beginning to return their attention to us. Dearing caught my eye, and for an

instant, his expression was appalled. I think he had actually forgotten my intimate acquaintance with the subject under discussion. Hastily, he said, "In the purely botanical sense, Your Grace, the thorns are sharp and rumored to be poisonous. I would count that dangerous."

"In the purely botanical sense," Robson, Dearing's cousin, repeated, laughing heartily. "Good one, old man." Robson was a fool, and what he thought 'botanical' meant was anyone's guess.

A few of the ladies tittered, trying to smooth over the awkward moment, and Dearing smiled nervously. Kohler smiled in return, as if he appreciated the joke, but said, "My interest lies more in what is rumored to be within the forest."

"White palaces, with gates of gold?" I said. "Halls paved with marble and hung with silks, velvet, jewels? The inhabitants still present, trapped there in time and magic, men and women—oh, yes, espe-

cially women—caught in sleep like flies in amber?" It doesn't do to mince words with these people, or they start to imagine themselves subtle.

The others were silent. Kohler's rather wolfish eyes narrowed. "Madame seems to speak from personal experience."

I had to fold my lips over a smile. "Young man, do you believe me as old as that?"

Kohler retreated in confusion.

Dearing nodded importantly. "Yes, there's a tale of a great house or keep of some past age trapped within the forest by whatever witchcraft caused the thorns to appear. It's pure legend. The thorns have always been there."

Kohler said, "You must be right," and allowed Dearing to turn the subject to a famous *faux* hill in the next county. This worried me more than anything. Our prince had not come to learn anything or to pry for information. He already knew. Had he known of my presence here when he had decided to break his journey at Dearing's house?

Perhaps.

THE ONLY OTHER CLASH OCCURRED after the gentlemen had finished their port and cigars and joined the ladies in the drawing room. I was working on a square of embroidery, seated in a corner away from the fire. I had always preferred spinning, but one can't do it in the drawing room nowadays. I still kept a wheel in my parlor and spun much of the finer thread we used in the house.

Kohler took a seat near me. He sat forward, a little closer than I liked; if he had done so to one of the other women in the

room, I would have felt compelled to intervene. Eyes intent, he said, "Madame...but I don't think we have been properly introduced?"

"If that's so, then you shouldn't be speaking to me at all," I pointed out.

He ignored that. The aristocracy feel they can take or leave manners at will, but let some poor baronet take that attitude with them, and they stiffen up like pokers.

He said, "I fear I must apologize, Madame. It seems I insulted you at dinner."

He hadn't liked being made to look a fool, and he was determined to bait me. I gazed at him from under lowered lids. "It seems you did. But if the thought of an apology frightens you, you would be ill-advised to continue on your present course."

"What course is that, Madame?" He spoke heartily, the attitude of a young man jolly along a cantankerous old lady. I disliked him, for all his blond curls and trim body; I had had better prizes than this in my prime.

The other ladies were watching us, though the men in the room remained oblivious. The blood is thin now, after all these generations, and it is easy for them to forget, as Dearing had. Electra was so nervous, she fluttered like a moth.

I said, "Why, whatever course a foreign noble pursues in our fair country."

"The course of justice, Madame," he said, eyeing me in a sort of grim satisfaction.

"Only that."

At the end of the evening, little Master Matthew escaped from the nursery long enough to upset the tea tray on Kohler's fashionable breeches. In the ensuing confusion, I rewarded the child with a sweet cake.

I retired shortly after that, or tried to. Dearing came up briefly to apologize for allowing the dinner conversation to stray to such a sensitive area for our family. I let it pass; I don't think he truly understood Kohler's purpose in coming here, and to most of the household my exploits are only stories, not truly to be believed.

Several of my younger great-grandnieces who fancied themselves my heirs in power came to offer various plots and plans for distracting or disposing of Kohler. One was of such a risqué nature that I was quite impressed, though I reminded the child that enthusiasm was no substitute for experience and talent. After dispensing solace and censure as it was required, I sent them all away and drew out my mirror to watch our illustrious guest.

He sat with the other men for a long time, until the lamps guttered and a servant was sent for to attend to them. They busied themselves with cards and brandy, though our prince did not imbibe to excess, as the others did.

Finally Dearing called an end to it, and they stumbled toward the stairs. I paused to stretch; my fingers were cramped from clutching the mirror so tightly. It had been a long day, and I anticipated a long night. I had no way to know whether Kohler would wait the few hours till morning and take his leave of Dearing as if he intended nothing else, or if he would leave the house sometime after the others retired. I would simply have to watch, and wait.

There was a knock at the door of my parlor. I ignored it. The servants knew better than to disturb me, and I had no wish to talk to any other member of the household. Then I heard the door ease open.

I was seated at my dressing table, in my bedchamber, and the door connecting it with my parlor stood open. I heard stealthy footsteps cross the carpet and pause just out of my range of vision. I smiled and said, "Oh, do come in and get it over with."

He took that last brave step and stood framed in my bedchamber door. It was Kohler's cavalry-troop valet, clutching a stout walking stick in one sweaty paw.

I admit to disappointment. It's an insult when they send their servants to kill you.

My displeasure must have been evident. He gripped the walking stick more firmly, muttered something like, "For king and country," and rushed at me.

I whipped up my mirror and he caught sight of his own reflection. He stumbled in his headlong rush and froze as my charm took effect. I had had ample time to prepare it as he crept across the parlor.

His eyes were stunned, then terrified, as white whiskers sprouted beneath his nose and gray patches of hair appeared on his face. That face shrunk steadily, disappearing finally within his collar as his suit of clothes collapsed.

I slammed my mirror down on the dressing table and stood, stepping over the confused mouse as it struggled to free itself from the pile of clothing. I hurried from the room without bothering with hat or cloak; I was angry now, truly angry for the first time since Kohler had arrived.

The tall oaks were like a great wall, mysterious, the gaps between them green cavern of unknown depth and

I took the servants' stairs, which were deserted at this hour, except for two gossiping downstairs maids who fled in panic at my appearance. As I pushed open the baize door, I sensed something behind me and turned just as the second of Kohler's servants was swinging one of our best silver candlesticks straight at my head. I ducked, muttering the first charm that came to mind, and the man cursed and dropped the suddenly red-hot silver.

Before I could take further action, the servant gave a choked cry and stumbled forward to collapse at my feet. Behind him stood Brooks, our head butler, armed with the other candlestick of the pair.

"Very good, Brooks," I said. Brooks has been with us a long time and knows the family history better than Dearing.

"Not at all, Madame." He stepped over the moaning body of Kohler's servant and held the door for me, snapping his fingers for the footmen gathering in the passage behind him to attend to the clutter. "Will Madame be needing the coach brought round?"

"No, thank you, Brooks, I haven't time." I hurried for the outer door. "Oh, Brooks," I paused. "There seems to be a mouse in my rooms. Better have one of the cats sent up."

"At once, Madame."

The night was dank and chill, but the moon was full and my blood was up. I could smell Kohler, the third of his servants, and a horse on the night air. At the end of the graveled drive, the oak tree informed me that Kohler had indeed passed this way, heading toward the forest.

Swift travel has long been one of my skills, and the moon gives me strength. I sped after him, sometimes on the muddy road, sometimes through the fields when the hedges permitted it.

The sky was gray with dawn when I reached the outskirts of the forest. I had followed in Kohler's path without difficulty and was satisfied to see his gig at the edge of the trees, the young servant standing at the horse's head. This one had never attacked me, so I contented myself with a simple spell of sleep. (I am, if I do say so myself, extraordinarily good with spells of sleep.) I blew it toward him on the light morning wind, and he sank to his knees, then slumped to the wet ground. The horse lowered its head to nose him

curiously.

Then I moved forward to stand at the edge of the Great Thorn Forest. The tall oaks were like a great wall, impenetrable and mysterious, the gaps between them giving entrance to a green cavern of unknown depth and danger. The smell of damp leaves and decayed secrets hung in the air.

My last hope was that Kohler was not truly of royal blood. But as I pushed past the low branches, I saw that the first growth of thorns had parted for him. They parted for me too, perhaps more willingly since I had given them life, and I took the path I had not taken in years.

Finally I let the thorns close behind me and threaded my way through what had been an extensive pleasure garden in a century gone by. Before me lay fountains buried under small mountains of moss; marble nymphs and satyrs clothed in tall grass; a sunken lake where gilded boats, empty and derelict, drifted; a waterfall grotto

now dry and the domain of spiders; and overgrown mazes, clotted with heavy wild roses and brambles. I heard the humming of bees, drowsy in the morning sun, but naught else stirred.

Vines had conquered the palace even as my spells had, burying it under a green avalanche, allowing only occasional glimpses of the white stone walls, the delicate turrets, and arched galleries. But the suffocating greenery had been pulled away from one of the great iron-bound doors, and it stood open, a dark passage gaping beyond it.

I caught up my skirts and ran.

The high halls were shadowed, the gemlike panes of the windows darkened by grime and the outer layer of foliage. Dust thick as flour coated the massive furniture, the tarnished silver, and the still-warm gold. Spider webs of astonishing size stretched down from the oaken beams overhead, bracketing the hall like tattered curtains. Sleeping servants lay in piles of rags, a few courtiers slumped against the walls or lay stretched on the flagstones, and one woman lay curled on her side in a pool of faded silk.

I could see the signs of his passing; he had stopped to peer and touch, even now.

I sped through dark marble halls, to the great winding pile of the central stair.

My power had waned somewhat with the moon's descent, and when I reached the room, the highest chamber in the tallest tower, I was badly out of breath. My hair was coming down in gray hanks, and I was glad indeed that I had never bothered with the foolish modern custom of corsets.

The chamber was round, with a dozen windows looking out over the sleeping domain. One was open, the faded curtains drawn back so that light fell on the bed draped with velvet and cloth of gold.

In that moment, my eyes were only for her.

She was barely more than a child. In the present day she would have lingered in the nursery, learning watercolors and geography. Blond hair covered her silken pillow, and her face was pale, pure, and still.

My eyes went to him next. He had had time to do nothing else but open the window, and he stared at me now, in shock and angry sur-

prise. "Not one step nearer," I said.

Kohler revealed no fear, and I suspected he felt none. He would have known little fear in his life of privilege. He glared at me impatiently and said, "You don't smile as you look on your evil work. Can it be you feel regret?" The thorns had torn his coat, his cravat was askew, and his curls were tousled. I still didn't like him. He had a tendency to go red in the face, and he would probably run to fat later. No, he was not the man to melt my heart at such a juncture.

"Not regret," I said. The journey here had tired me and this place roused memories. "I was young, in the fullness of my power, and the failure to invite me to the christening was only the last and worst of the insults I suffered. Or thought I suffered. I could not have done else, being what and who I was. In my long life I've done worse and I've done better since."

impenetrable and giving entrance to a danger.

He shook his head in disgust. "You are cruel indeed to look on such an innocent face and relegate it to eternal sleep."

"Cruel, yes. But now the cruelty is in the service of kindness. You've seen this place; you must guess its age. The time to wake her is a hundred years past. Releasing her into our world would be to relegate innocence to Hell."

He laughed. "Lies, sophistry."

I PERSISTED IN MY PERHAPS FOOLISH EFFORT to make him understand. "The king here is a king no more. He cannot even claim the land his palace stands on. It would be stripped, the riches stolen. The inhabitants would be lost, maddened by the changes around them. The servants and peasants would be cast out to starve, the nobles trotted about as curiosities. I haven't the power anymore to protect them from it and must live with the consequences of my folly. You would expose her to that?" It was useless. They will say I have done it from jealousy, that I am an old and bitter woman and couldn't bear to see a beautiful young girl triumph in happiness.

Let them say it.

I know the world. I began this out of foolishness and a desire for vengeance, I admit, and I continued it out of folly. But I ended it in sober judgment, and this was not the prince to break my spell or warm her heart.

The gaze he turned on her had passion in it, but it was not the passion of love. I had seen the same light in young Matthew's eyes when I gave him the sweet cake. He said, "Her, her I would take back with me, to protect and cherish..."

"And to perdition with her family, her companions, her loyal ser-

vants? She would not thank you for that, if the shock of her situation left her with the power of speech." He said nothing, staring at me angrily, and I began to suspect that his motives were even less pure than I had thought. Incredible as it seems, I felt responsible for her, as if I were her nursemaid and not her captor. Moving closer, I said, "But perhaps that would be more to your taste. A prince of your age is surely married?"

He flushed, in a blotchy and unattractive fashion. "I could hardly expect you to understand, witch." He reached into his pocket and I suddenly found myself facing a small pistol.

I blinked foolishly. Now there, stupid old woman, how many times did you tell yourself the rules had changed? My most effective method of defense was a sleep spell, but if I raised my hand to my lips to blow it toward him, he would have time to fire. The pistol's grip was fine wood; if I made the weapon hot, he would still be

able to trigger it.

The curtains at the open window behind him stirred, though the air in the room remained musty and still. Delay, I thought, I must delay. I was too old to throw myself about, dodging balls or bullets or whatever it is pistols shoot at one nowadays. Whatever had possessed me to attempt to talk to the man? I said, "A sword is more customary, and more honorable."

His smile was irritatingly complacent. "I know your kind too well to rely on honor, Madame," he said.

"Then it's fortunate you don't know the rest of my family," I replied.

His expression suddenly turned fearful, and I knew he would fire his weapon. I threw myself awkwardly to the floor as the

gun went off. Smoke and the stink of powder filled the room. I raised my head and saw Kohler, unconscious and crumpled helplessly on the floor. I pushed myself into an awkward sitting position and saw the bullet had made a terrible mark on the wall behind me.

Then Electra was bending over me anxiously. Her hair was mussed and torn from her flight up to the window, and her morning dress was stained from crouching in the casement. I had seen her preparing to cast a sleep spell on Kohler, but her spells do not work quite so fast as mine. "Oh, Auntie, are you all right?"

"Of course I am," I said. I was not. I was covered in dust from the floor, and I was bruised and exhausted. Electra took my arm and I allowed her to help me up.

"You should have told me that he meant to come here, Auntie," Electra scolded. "You should never have followed him here alone. He could have killed you."

"He failed," I said. "That is all that matters." Then I ruined the solemn effect by sneezing uncontrollably.

"We'll get you right home for a nice cup of tea," Electra promised, and I admitted that it would be a welcome restorative.

She returned to Kohler's unconscious form and bent over him. "Take his other arm, Auntie?"

I looked down at his lumpy body with distaste. "What on earth for?"

"We're taking him back to the house. I'll put a bit of my special dust in his tea, and he won't remember a thing. We'll tell him he had a nasty fall from his horse and send him off no whit the wiser." She frowned. "You didn't do anything too permanent to his servants, did you?"

"Not too," I remarked, reluctantly stooping to seize his other arm. I am hardly responsible for the vagaries of cats.

We hauled him toward the window. I had lost my gift for flight years ago, but Electra was strong enough to take all three of us. I thought Kohler deserved to stay here with the woman he meant to awaken. Not as fitting a punishment as I would have devised in my youth, but satisfying nonetheless. But Electra has a soft heart, and it is useless to argue with her. ♦

Red Rotting Head pits her pure heart and iron will against three New York wolves.

OUTSIDE THE WALLS

BY DAN'L DANEHY-OAKES

Illustration by Mike Wright

THIS IS THE STORY OF RED ROTTING HEAD AND the three wolves, as it is told from Montauk to Monesson, from Bangor to Baltimore, and wherever people still remember the name and the shame and the flame of forbidden New York.

Once upon a time there was a space; and in that space there was a place; and in that locus there is a focus: now let us focus upon a girl, and she was called Red Rotting Head. She was called Red Rotting Head because red, red was the color of her true love's eyes, and he came to her at night. His days he spent in the earth. As much as he took from her, he gave back, and they loved each other well and truly.

Her hair was as long as whips and as black as the name of wolves. Her eyes were as bright as the sun on black glass and as wide as space. Her lips were as red as the blood of lions and as full as the *Book of the Damned*. Her heart was pure, and her will was iron.

She lived alone with her mother. On one side of their cottage was the wall of forbidden New York, and on the other side was a forest inhabited only by unicorns, huntsmen, and other mythical beasts. Red Rotting Head's mother did not think about that forest very often, but when she did, she would warn her daughter to stay away from its dark and its green.

But one day her mother called to her and said that her own mother, Red Rotting Head's grandmother, had a terrible accident that very



morning and could not care for herself or cook her own food.

Red Rotting Head had often wondered how her mother, in that lonely cottage, could know anything of the world outside, for no travelers ever came to their house.

Now, her mother was a witch and knew many things from a magic mirror she kept on the ceiling of her room. She had only to look into it and say—

Magic Mirror, this I'm bent on:

How's my mamma down in Trenton?

—and the mirror would tell her all she wanted to know.

Red Rotting Head knew not to ask her mother about that sort of thing. Instead, she asked how her grandmother had come to have such an accident.

Her mother said that she had pricked her finger on a needle, or maybe a spindle, she was not sure which; but, since such wounds were always hazardous, and the old lady lived by herself, aid must come quickly.

Red Rotting Head was as dutiful as she was beautiful. She said, "I will bring food to her, but it must be food that is ready to eat; and to carry the food I will need a basket."

"As it happens," said her mother, "I have such a basket here, filled with tinned sardines and canned milk, with juices in boxes and beans in cans, with iced fruits (so you must go quickly or not at all) and potted meats."

Red Rotting Head took the basket. "I will go willingly," she said,



"but if I am to go quickly with this heavy basket, I will need a horse and warm clothes for the journey."

So her mother spoke a word to a spider's web, and it became a cloak to cover her. She spoke another word to a leaf, and it became a broad hat to shade her. She spoke a third word to an ant, and it became a mare to carry her quickly. "But you must travel quickly and arrive before sundown," she said, "for the enchantment is of the daylight only."

Red Rotting Head set off for her grandmother's house, wearing a fine green hat and a fine white cloak and seated on a fine red mare. And though the mare was fast and strong, wise and obedient (for it had been an ant), she feared that she might not arrive before the sun set, for her grandmother lived quite some distance from their house outside the walls, on the other side of the forest. She wasn't afraid for her own sake, but for her mother, who might worry if Red Rotting Head were late.

So it might have been otherwise if she had known about her mother's magic mirror. But because her mother had always guarded that secret, she did not know, and when she saw the sign that said, "Short Cut to Grandma's House," she neither wondered how it came to be there, nor paused, but followed the side trail that led into the forest. And because her heart was pure and her will was iron, she was not afraid.

Now, the name of that forest was and is Broceliande. Broceliande has been many other forests in other placetimes, but outside the

walls of forbidden New York, it is a forest filled with haunts and taunts, with presences that should not be and absences that are. At the center of Broceliande is a terrible hunger. Red Rotting Head knew about the hunger, but she was clever. She left a trail of crumbs behind her so she could find her way out if she wandered too close in.

As she rode she sang a song:

Jack be oily

Jack be slick

Jack can lubricate all that stick

It was her own song, and she sang it loudly and proudly, merrily and airily on her way, until, on the path in front of her, she saw the *white wolf*.

He was tall and he was thin; his hair and his skin were milky white; and his eyes were milky and pupilless. His hand groped occasionally for something at his hip, but there was nothing there. In his eyes there was a hunger like the hunger at the forest's heart.

The *white wolf* spoke in a voice like a sparrow's breathing. "Where are you going, Red Rotting Head?"

Red Rotting Head did not recognize the *white wolf*, so she said, "How do you know my name?"

The *white wolf* said, "I know all who enter this wood. I knew Robin and Lancelot, and I know you."

Now she knew that she was afraid, for she felt her will of iron softening before this lean white man of a wolf.

Continued on page 84



Old angers die hard. Sometimes they even refuse to die at all.

MENDING MARIS

BY ANNE YOUNG

Illustration by Mary O'Keefe Young

Occasionally, holding the lead as the docile old gelding trotted in an obliging circle, Maris would experience a flash of unwelcome self-consciousness. She could see herself from the eyes of the round, shiny cheeked children who bounced atop Plodge in their expensive high boots and matte black helmets. From their point of view, she was dried as an apple is dried, brown and lifeless, her mouth a thin and unfriendly line. In her *gosha*, the long wrapped garment that covered her from her throat to her ankles, with her gray wrinkled face turned up to them, she must look like a living hex, the curse that happens to children who don't obey the Articles.

On other days, the riding lessons passed without incident, the children left for the valley in their bright red coats at the center of the flurry of wasteful energy that traveled with them, their arrogant loud voices thundering up to the high raftered roof of the ring.

Their echoes lingered behind them, and in the stillness that descended, Maris would groom Plodge. She would rub his coarse coat while he stood patiently tethered to an iron ring and comb his mane slowly with long strokes. While she brushed him, she murmured the verses of the *Euphoriad*, worn now as old leather made supple with oil, as if they were not many words strung together like beads on a string, but one infinite, many syllabled word. In her inside ears, it thrummed...*peace be a long river where all shall drink, peace be the days of summer that all shall make harvest, peace be a night without wolves that all shall find rest...and so forward until the verse was done, or Plodge began to stamp in place and shake his mane.*

She would take him by his halter rope and lead him out into the pen behind the stable and watch him as he bent his neck to the granite cistern to drink. Then she would raise her eyes to the farthest point of the road, squinting, feeling the corners of her mouth draw down. Only the stillness would answer, and she would think, as she turned to walk up the crooked path to her sod house, *Not today. Perhaps he will come tomorrow.*

SHE HELD THE WINE IN HER CUPPED HANDS AND bent over it, saying the proper words without inflection. *First was the fruit, then the blessing. I am blessed.* She drank the wine and touched her hands to the cloth spread over her knees. Taking the baked round of dark bread, she held it for a moment before her and said to the empty room, *First was the grain, then the blessing. I am blessed.* She closed her eyes and ate the bread, which was faintly sweet with honey. Her knees groaned as she rose up onto them, carefully folding the cloth and placing it on the table next to the small wooden wine cask. She took the lid and covered the cask. From the stable, Plodge whickered and bumped with his shoulder against his stall, then was quiet.

Maris stood and unwrapped her *goshi* from her neck, feeling the lush cool evening embrace her bare skin. Looping the garment over a long curved hook, she turned and walked naked to her bath, where she scooped up water over her arms, onto her face. Glittering with droplets, she stood at her window with her hands on the sill and looked out over her garden to the high grasses, and beyond them, to the meniscus of the moon as it rose atop the peak of Horus Mons. *First was the mountain, then the blessing. I am blessed. Tomorrow he will come.*

THERE WERE NO LESSONS THE NEXT MORNING; IT WAS SATURNDAY, the short day. Maris woke before the sun, repeating her ritual with the wine and the bread. She took her *goshi* and the white cloth and her bedclothes and put them by the door. Slipping into a loose tunic without sleeves, she went to the stable to let Plodge into the pen. He went gratefully, tossing his head up and down, and immediately began to roll in a patch that he had made bald and dusty with his broad back. Maris smiled, showing the stubs of her teeth, as Plodge raised his head and shook the dust from his mane like a dog.

The faraway whine of an electric motor made Maris look up from her washing. At first she thought it might be a parent coming to inquire about lessons, a mother with varnished fingernails, winking with gold jewelry, with points all about her, pointed shoes, pointed breasts, pointed nose. Maris wrung her sheet as she watched the glinting on the windscreen at the end of the road, raising a puff of grit behind. She made the sheet into a ball, carried it to the tall grasses, and snapped it open. It billowed down onto the heavy heads of the grass, which swayed beneath it.

Putting her hand up to shield her eyes, she looked again at the electric cart. It was much closer. It was dark green, with yellow stripes on the doors, and a crest on the motor cover. Maris walked down the path on the leathery soles of her bare feet to meet it, passing the stable, hearing the clop of Plodge's hooves on the baked dust. She was not hurrying, and by the time that she reached the scrubby

verge, a man in a green uniform was climbing out from the cart. There was red dust on his shiny shoes.

"I have orders..." he began, and halted, his eyes seeing her clearly, a small burnt raisin of a woman in a woven brown tunic. "You must...will you come with me, please. Ma'am. To the valley."

Maris looked back at Plodge, at her washing drying on the hill-side.

"No," she said to the uniform, because she could not clearly see his face. "He knows where I live. He can come here."

The policeman looked sorrowful and uncomfortable, his pink skin was moist with perspiration. "I have orders."

"As do I," said Maris, and turned away from him to walk back up the crooked path. He followed her, calling out.

"It is very important. Please."

"No," she said, without turning, "He knows! He knows very well."

The young man's breath was labored, he was unused to the dust and the heat on the face of the mountain, and the path was steep.

"He will die tonight, the doctors say. He sent a message."

Maris put out her hand to the fence post and turned slowly, looking down at the policeman. He looked like the children, his face was round and pink, unmarked, pliant with youth and uncertain authority. She took the folded paper from his outstretched hand but did not open it.

"Peace be the road's end, that all may shed the burden. Let him die."

The policeman shuffled his toe around the crown of a polished stone in the path, started forward, looked back. Thinking of his orders, he took two more steps up the incline, only to see the tail of her tunic twitch in the doorway of her low-linted house, and the door squeak firmly shut behind her. He looked helplessly around him, at the roof of the ring in the pasture, at the chips of paint on the ground and the gouges in the stable where Plodge had chewed. The air brought more dust into his mouth and he coughed. Abandoning his mission, the policeman went down to his electric cart, his shoes scrabbling on the path.

MARIS WATCHED FROM HER WINDOW AS THE CART REVERSED IN THE road and turned back toward the valley, kicking up a spurt of pebbles and grit. Putting her hands over her mouth, Maris wept silently, the tears following the tracks of her face, burning her cheeks.

ON MARTENDAY THE CHILDREN DIDN'T COME. MARIS STOOD AT THE verge, her chin lifted to the road, waiting for the whine of the carts, playing the reasons for the delay like a Verse. Janene wasn't feeling well, no one plugged the cart in last night, the key card wouldn't work and we were stuck in the garage, if you can imagine. She waited until it was impossible that they should be late. The valley road had been closed, then, and the men in uniforms would allow no one to leave. It was this, more than the dream she had had last night, that convinced her of his death. He was dead, just as the policeman had foretold. Gathering a fold of her *goshi* in her hand, she tore it, and taking the rent edges in both her hands, she walked again up the crooked path.

The paper message was still folded unread near the wine cask. Her ringless hands were sure in unmaking the intricate origami folds and pressing the paper flat. It was not his handwriting, but a scribe's; he must have been very ill to communicate with her through a third person. Closing her eyes, she spoke a fragment of a Verse. For strength. *Peace be the shoulder of the mountain, that all may find shelter.* She repeated it until the stillness of the Horus Mons entered her heart, and she lifted the message close to her face, narrowing her eyes to read.

My darling wife, please come to me. Absolution awaits you in your book, which I have here beside me. Only when you come to me and take my hand and press it again to your hair can I return it to you. If you do not come to me and ask, as others ask, for the Decision, the mountain will shake, the river will engulf the valley. Your book promises

*this. You must come, before my eyes close forever.
Your husband, who loves you yet.
Magister Folsom DuBry, signed here with my mark
and so writ.*

LOWERING THE PAPER TO HER KNEES, MARIS SMILED WITH A GOOD wry tiredness. "Husband, your eyes are closed, and the mountain stands fast."

SHE SAT ASTRIDE PLODGE, HER BARE BROWN FEET DANGLING, HER knees pressed tight to the dun blanket slung across his shoulders. She touched him with her heels, and he set off at a canter through the pasture, cleaving the high grass. His ears pricked forward and he went without guidance, curious, as Maris was curious, to see the valley after her long, dry exile and to take back the book he had stolen.

The road wound at her left hand like a waterless riverbed, and she kept it near for point of reference; it had been a long time since she had left the mountain, and she wanted to be sure of the way. The tableland stretched for a mile or so, then abruptly fell away down a steep cliffside grown over with clover and thin armed trees. The road followed a natural shelf, veering west, and Maris tugged on Plodge's halter rope. He turned quickly and trotted on, slowing to a walk as he joined with the road.

When the road stopped twisting in its downward course, the top of Maris's head was shiny hot, and her eyes were dry with dust. She pulled Plodge up. He was grateful for a rest. Maris looked back over her shoulder, where the road curved up the way they had come, and across the valley to the low, sloping hills in the east. It puzzled her that there were no birdcalls from the valley, no shrill insect cries. The heat made its own noise, pressing on the ears, but it was not alive. Plodge shifted back, lifting a foreleg, letting the hoof dangle. He stepped down again and shook his head, puffing through his long nose. Maris touched him with her heels and he shook his mane, making it stubbornly clear that his curiosity had been worn away by the heat. She touched him again and he lurched forward, setting down his hooves one before the other, hanging his head.

ALMOST AT THE FOOT OF GREAT Horus now, a creek moved quietly beside the road. Maris gave Plodge leave to drink. He put his head down. Maris was surprised by the quick tightening in his shoulders, the powerful ripple of fear that passed down his spine. He reared his head up and started three steps back. Maris gripped hard with her knees and leaned close to his strong neck, speaking soothingly, her fingers twined tight in his mane. He shook away her reassurances and turned his flank to the brook, his eyes rolling, taking high prancing steps with his forelegs. He twisted sideways down the road, fighting the rope that Maris held steady, a whistle of fright growing in his long throat. Maris pulled hard, turning him in a tight circle. The dust rose around them. He backstepped again, but the heat was a potent tranquilizer, and the sweat was foaming at his withers. At last he was still, the breath wheezing in his great barrel chest, and Maris slid down from her seat.

She tied the halter rope to the trunk of a thin juka tree and chose a rock from the road's embankment. Warm in her hand, it was heavy, with a sharp broken edge. She held her *goshu* in one hand and approached the bank of the creek, the stone held high to strike. Her senses were tuned to hear a rustle in the grass, perhaps the hiss of a swimming snake. Straining with her ears, she heard nothing, saw nothing. Picking her steps carefully, she moved down among the mossy tendrils and hairy grass root ganglia at the creek's edge, her eyes sharp, her ears keen. So intent was Maris on her search for what

she might have to kill that her toes touched the water before she saw it. She stood in wonderment, the stone clutched to her thin chest, her lips parting and closing.

The creek was running with water-colored honey. She lowered herself down to the damp moss, wrapping her arms around her knees to watch the miracle. Over rocks and around the stems of the water pads the creek crawled, welling in viscous humps over a round headed boulder at the edge of the opposite shore, bulging up in ropy wavelets by the rough hemmed edge of her *goshu*. Up and down the stream she looked and saw the same. Water, but not water.

The smoothed pebbles in the creek's bed glimmered beneath the surface, the sun spangled with exquisite slowness, tracing ripples as if with a golden ink brush. Maris closed her eyes against the brightness, seeing copies of the wild white lines on the inside of her eyelids. It was like nothing she had ever seen before in all her years.

She took the rock in both hands and cast it out into the midst of the stream. Slowly it rose, arcing away, flying away, hanging above the water indefinitely, then slowly settling and touching the surface, which gave laggardly, swallowing the stone like a slow mouth. Maris watched the stone's interminable descent. The water bowed, then made many bowls as the stone sank, rocking onto its sharp edge, then tumbling over onto its back. Maris reached out with tentative fingers to graze the water's edge.

Only water. She cupped her hand beneath the surface, gaining courage, and cupped a shivering mass in her hand. She let it go, and it poured from her hand thickly, making a column from her fingers to the water's surface, which stirred only slightly to accept it. Finding no answer, no explanation, Maris stood. She turned her back on the miracle and climbed the bank.

Plodge stood quietly near the juka tree, nibbling a leaf. He allowed Maris to wrangle herself up onto his back, flopping on her stomach and pulling with her arms. When she sat astride him again, the halter rope in her hand, he pointed his nose amicably toward the valley. A horse has a short memory.

AT THE FOOT OF THE VALLEY ROAD, THERE WAS NO ROADBLOCK manned by uniformed officers after all. The turn-off from the paved road was barren of any life at all. Plodge clip-clopped from the dirt to the plastic paving, a flat ribbon of milky polymer that led to the heart of the valley in either direction. Maris turned his head toward the city proper and he stepped hesitantly, his nostrils rippling like velvet flags, his ears pricked up.

Maris looked over the valley floor, at the shaggy expanse of raigrass and five-petaled clover, the reflective roofs of houses in square plots demarcated by gardens and wide-spaced deal saplings. No children's shouts, no whine of electric carts. Her eyes narrowed as she peered at a scrap of color in one unremarkable garden, a woman's shelf-brimmed red hat. The woman stood bent over a row of lettuces, deep in contemplation. Maris watched for some sign of life from the woman, who persisted in showing none at all, her arm interminably outstretched to her greens. A branch caught Maris's hair, and she brushed at it, the back of her hand stroking across an unexpected oily softness, and she gasped. It was not a branch at all, but a starling, its beak wide, suspended above the road as if with wire. Plodge pulled up, swinging his head around to level a broad eye on her.

Maris blinked. The bird's wing trembled, then stilled. Maris touched it again with a fingertip. Its breast was ruffled with flight, its eyes two bright hard beads, its wings drawn in, the rasping hooks of its feet thrust forward for purchase on the earth.

"I am blessed," she said, and Plodge undertook the last leg of the journey, one foot before the other, until they passed into the town.

The wonders unrolled, the stillness a blanket pulled over bankers and grocers, over electric carts, over an argument between two young women in an upper window.

"This is my husband's doing. He is waiting for us in the palace," she said into the stillness, and her voice was damped. Plodge side-

Continued on page 82



Where do guilt, love, fear, anger and hope conjoin? Watch a mother with her daughter, and you'll see.

MOTHER MOVES IN

AYBEE, SLEEPING LATE AFTER PAINTING MOST OF THE night, startled awake at the sound of knocking at her door. Knocking, because she'd disconnected the cloyingly sweet bell chimes. She hauled herself out of bed, grabbed a robe to cover the octopus tattoo over most of her torso, and stumbled across the living room. When she cracked the door open, the daylight made her squint. With artist's eyes, she cataloged the woman waiting on the doorstep—the platinated hair, the carefully tended, hormone-plumped skin, the understated but expensive clothes.

Mother.

The last time she'd seen Mother was five years ago, at the reception for Aybee's first one-woman show in the Marina Yacht Club gallery, overlooking the Los Angeles Harbor Wildlife Preserve. The gallery glittered in a kaleidoscope of space-crystallized gems and champagne, yet what stood out in Aybee's memory was a single unguarded glimpse of Mother's face, eyes slitted and lower lip twisted between her teeth, staring at the watercolor of Medusa devouring her offspring as they emerged from her womb.

What the hell was Mother doing here now?

"Well, my dear!" Mother dropped the tether to the matched set of wheeled luggage—real leather, dyed burgundy, gold piping—and held out her hands. Clean hands, Aybee noticed, nails short but manicured, pale pink glitterpolish. Three rings—ruby

BY DEBORAH WHEELER
Illustration by Debbie Hughes

and star-sapphire and onyx set in white gold.

"Give Mother a kiss."

Aybee leaned forward and allowed herself to be pecked on each cheek. Luggage. Kisses. It added up to a visit. Inside her stomach, butterflies started screaming.

"I had no idea—" Aybee stammered. "I didn't expect—"

Mother swept past Aybee into the front room. She stood in the center and slowly turned around. Her eyes scanned the sofa with its bedspread disguise askew, the coffee table covered with sketch books, jars of charcoal pencils and dried hibiscus, a crumpled, already degrading news flimsy, bits of driftwood and a half-empty wine glass. She paused, brows knitting, as if noticing her daughter's reaction for the first time.

"You received my videogram, didn't you?"

Aybee had no phone, let alone a video terminal, although she could have afforded one. Her deliberate isolation mirrored her refusal to use the usual computerized canvas impregnation techniques. Her monthly allowance from the trust Mother had set up for her went for real paints and brushes first, food second. Everything else, especially in this last year of frenzied creation, was an inconvenience, a distraction.

"Well, my dear!" Mother exclaimed again. "This will be a surprise, then, but—" she flung out her arms expansively, "—I've come to stay with you!"

"Stay with me? Here? What do you mean? For how long?"

"Just a few months—"

"Months!"

For an instant, Mother's smile verged toward brittleness, the skin stretched tight across cheek and jaw to reveal the shape of the underlying skull. "I don't expect it will be much more."

"Mother," Aybee said, gesturing vaguely at the room, "you can't live here." There weren't words to describe the absurdity of introducing Mother—Mother, of all people!—into the demented clutter of her life.

"Where would you sleep?"

"These are all two-bedroom units, so I'll just take the second bedroom and one of the baths. Don't worry, I'll bring in everything I need. I'll be no bother at all."

Air surged through Aybee's throat, but no words. *Say something!* she pleaded with herself. *No or How dare you after all these years? Or I don't owe you a damned thing...*

"My friends wanted me to buy into their golden-years resort," Mother continued brightly, "but I said to them, 'Why should I leave my home to live with strangers when I have a family of my own? I mean, my god, what are families for?'"

What were families for? Why conceive a child, dump the embryo in an incubator, and trot off to Tropez-Lanaï or Mozambique or wherever Mother had been all these years?

Aybee thought bitterly that she would have been better off with an octopus for a mother. A female octopus, which wasn't even human, would care for her brood of eggs with such devotion that

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mother. A female
octopus, which
wasn't even
human, would
care for her brood
of eggs with such
devotion that she
refused food, living
only long enough
to see them hatch.
Aybee found them
fascinating, with
their unblinking
eyes...*

she refused food, living only long enough to see them hatch. Most people thought octopuses repulsive creatures, but Aybee found them fascinating, with their unblinking eyes and shapeless bodies. She spent hours watching them at the aquarium. A Japanese fisherman she met along New Venice Beach had caught one in a pail. When she touched it, a tentacle curled around her finger, mute and clinging. It haunted her dreams, that touch.

Now Aybee sank into the sofa and felt a spring go *thwong!* under her. "Why now?" she said. "Why wait until now?"

"We can discuss that later. For now, think of this visit as a chance to really get to know each other, to spend some real mother-daughter time together. Just imagine the lovely talks we'll have!"

"I don't talk, Mother. I paint."

"Then you paint, dear, and I'll sit quietly and watch."

Stiff with fury, Aybee got up and went into the room she had never thought of as a bedroom and began packing up her supplies. It would just be for a little while, she told herself, just until some new project caught Mother's attention—rain forests in Honduras one month, folk art in Belorussia the next.

Besides, what right had she to say no? Mother owned the apartment and everything in it. Aybee would have to find some way to endure.

In the kitchen, Aybee shoved last night's unwashed plates to one side and set the wooden paint box and jars of sable brushes down on the table. She'd have to work here, because the light in the living room was no good. But there was no room to stretch out her arms, breathing in the heady aromas of turpentine and linseed oil, dancing the colors out of her brain and on to the canvas.

"And the dressers, too, both of them," trilled Mother from the direction of the front door. Aybee ducked into the hallway just as the delivery men carried in a bed that was more machinery than mattress, all

monitor panels and controls with an afterthought of white iron filigree. They deposited it in the bedroom beside the luggage.

"Mother," Aybee whispered again through gritted teeth, "you can't stay here."

AYBEE LAY AWAKE THE NEXT MORNING, STARING AT THE PHOTOGRAPH of Melissa. Taken years ago, before the cancer had pared her to the bone, the dark face looked out at Aybee, smooth and shiny.

"Missa," Aybee whispered. "My Melissa." She'd started calling her Missa when she was too little to talk right, and the name stuck. She remembered the shock in kindergarten when she learned that other children didn't have Missas too. They had Nanas and Marys, brothers and sisters and fathers, or sometimes donors, like Aybee. But only Aybee had Missa.

Missa brought warmth, an unending source of lullabies, kisses and crayons. Missa protected Aybee against boogie-men and

monsters in the closet. But against *Mother*, Missa had no power. *Mother* was the glittery lady who swooped down on her, talons gleaming as if with fresh blood, who sent her, alone and terrified, to boarding school, to tennis camp, to art school in Paris, one place after another. *Mother* was the invisible force which sent Missa away on Aybee's tenth birthday. Forever, except that Missa had found and kept the newspaper article on Aybee's first show and telephoned the gallery from the hospital. Sibylla, the gallery owner and Aybee's friend, had forwarded the message immediately. Aybee never told *Mother* about that last visit.

Now Aybee rolled over, rumpling the faded sheets. *If you didn't want me*, she thought furiously, *why didn't you let me belong to someone who did?*

Slowly Aybee became aware of a rhythmic noise, *whoosh-clunk-clunk*, *whoosh-clunk-clunk*, coming from the studio. Not the studio, never again the studio. The bedroom. *Mother's* bedroom.

She propped herself up on one elbow, listening. The covers slipped from her body, revealing the octopus tattoo. Tentacles formed an intricate garland of red and blue suckers between the curve of her breasts, then swirled around her belly button and disappeared into the bush of her pubic hair. They rippled with the soft movement of her breath as if they had a life of their own, forever cradling her within her skin.

Feeling heartened, Aybee dressed and opened her bedroom door. Outside, in the square of hallway, the door to the main bathroom stood partly open. A new cabinet had been installed, with its own independent water purifier and dental polishing systems. Aybee ran her fingertips over the chrome and pink enamel, leaving oily streaks.

She stood for a few moments in front of the door, *Mother's* door. A phone had been installed beside it on the wall, with a emergency call panel. No need to dial, just touch the panel and help was on its way. Aybee had never seen one before, just the billboard ads.

She shifted her focus back to the door. The paint seemed newer than the rest of the apartment, as if for all the years she'd lived there it had been miraculously suspended in time. She had never closed it when she lived alone, that was all.

Now she took hold of the handle and twisted it slowly but firmly. *Whoosh-clunk-clunk*. The first thing she saw was the bank of lights and dials above the bed, then the clear walls of the oxygen chamber. Green lights blinked and lines hopped across the rows of screens. Levers and switches cried out to Aybee to be pressed. A wig stood on its holder on the dresser.

Mother lay on her back, folded between the lace-edged sheets, respirator panel poised over her chest. Aybee hardly recognized her, she seemed so vulnerable, so suddenly old. Her mouth had fallen open, cheeks sunk, crepey skin draped over the starkness of her bones. Aybee drew nearer, peering at the stranger's face as if she could read some clue to the riddle of her own life there.

Whoosh-clunk-clunk. Aybee looked up. Glowing red letters across the control panel read:

CONGESTIVE HEART SYNDROME LEVEL 5
SLEEP APNEA LEVEL 1
RESUSCITATION FUNCTION ON

Aybee didn't know anything about congestive heart syndrome except it sounded serious, but Level 5 seemed high. Sleep apnea, on the other hand, she recognized. She'd been diagnosed with it a few years ago, during an abortive attempt at treatment for her nightmares. *So what if I hold my breath when I sleep?* she'd told the doctors and refused the monitor.

Mother's machines were far more elaborate than a simple alarm. She couldn't stop breathing as long as they were on. She couldn't even die. The resuscitation function wouldn't let her.

Mother did not stir as Aybee closed the door. The latch caught with a snap. Aybee ran trembling hands through her hair and went to set up her paints on the kitchen table. There might be time for an hour or two of good light before *Mother* woke up.

THE BLANK CANVAS REMAINED SULLENLY MUTE. NO VISIONS SPOKE to Aybee as she stared at it, no orchids with the mouths of sharks, no ruined temples sinking into rainbow-hued swamps.

Silence. Emptiness.

In disgust, she put the canvas away and replaced her tubes of paint, brushes and palette knives in the wooden case, each in its proper slot. She closed the box and placed her hands flat on the satiny pine lid. Sometimes it seemed the paints gave off a subtle vibration which only she could feel. She often imagined their powerful magic working upward along her nerves. But not today. Perhaps never again, as long as *Mother* was here.

After a moment, the kitchen became less of a prison than merely a long, sunlit room. Aybee slid the paint box behind the table, shielded from careless feet and god knows what kind of machinery *Mother* would drag into the apartment next. In the same narrow space between the side of the cabinet and the table were stacked a half dozen finished paintings and a worn cardboard portfolio of watercolors, subtle pastel nightmares.

She felt surprised when she reached to pick up the paintings, that no painful electric spark leapt out. The canvases felt dull and inert under her touch, all life bled out of them. They no longer belonged to her. Whatever passion she'd poured into them had long since dissipated. It was time to let them go. In a breathless rush, she wrapped them in the cleanest sheet she could find, shoved her tram pass into her faded khaki satchel, and slammed out the door.

MY GOD, AYBEE, SO THESE are what you've been up to this last year. They're brilliant." Sibylla glanced from the death-angel centaur to the tiger, weeping as its hindquarters disappeared into the maw of a giant sea anemone. She laid the paintings over the floor of her gallery office so she could look at them all at once. "They remind me of Goya and Dali and Pir  , all at once. Are there more?"

Aybee heard the exhilaration in Sibylla's voice. She was already planning another one-woman show. The thought had no power to excite Aybee now.

"My god," Sibylla repeated.

Who believes in god any more? Aybee wondered. *Didn't he invent mothers?* She stared out at the street below, the rich shops across Rodeo Drive, the palm trees stark against the sun-browned hills. Her throat tightened.

"You're really offering these...you won't back out on me like last time?" Sibylla's voice was as taut and polished as she was. "I swear, I'll kill you if you do."

I'd give them away on the street, Aybee thought, *but then you really would kill me*. She smiled despite herself and saw Sibylla's shoulders relax. Once, when they'd been students in Paris together, there had been no need for such a dance of gestures. Once they'd been able to talk.

Sibylla would get top dollar for the paintings, enough so that Aybee could support herself instead of living on *Mother's* trust fund. It occurred to Aybee that she could have done this at any time since her first show. She didn't know why she hadn't.

"I wish you'd get help," Sibylla said hesitantly. "I worry about you." She got up and stood beside Aybee at the window. She touched Aybee's arm and drew a breath, as if she were about to say something more.

Aybee stiffened and moved away. "I needed the room. *Mother's* moved in with me."

"I thought she died last year."

Aybee's hands sought the door handle. "My real mother." Sibylla's voice was lost in the hallway as she hurried away.

AYBEE, CLOSING THE FRONT DOOR BEHIND HER, FELT THE EDDIES OF air swirl and die. The corners of the living room seemed to draw away from her, secretive. Whatever haunted the shadows was no longer hers alone.

"Mother?"

No answer, only the lingering sense of invasion. Aybee left her satchel in a shapeless lump on the floor and went to the second bedroom, half-hoping that Mother would have given up after a single night.

No, there was the phone on the wall beside the door. Dressers covered with cosmetic and jewelry boxes flanked the huge mechanized bed. The wig holder stood empty beside a silver-framed photograph of Aybee at age twelve. Aybee picked it up, wondering if this was how Mother saw her—cheeks blotched with adolescent hormones, hair tied back and then released into a cascade of studied curls, eyes shadowed, lower lip slightly forward.

She replaced the portrait, touched an empty perfume bottle of cut crystal, and opened a top drawer. Underwear, some kind of synthetic like heavy silk. Next drawer, hosiery. Scarves.

Disgusted at herself for pawing through this woman's belongings like a furtive child, Aybee slammed the drawers shut and threw herself on the bed. Although the mattress felt soft, it did not give under her weight. She turned, swung her feet up and slowly lowered herself. At first her spine stayed tightly curved, as if her muscles didn't want to release. Then she became aware of a faint vibration and warmth underneath her.

For long moments, she lay still, studying the bed controls, noting how the respirator panel extended on its servo-arm right above her chest. She could activate the oxygen chamber with a touch.

As Aybee focused on the readout screens, she recognized the rhythm as the same one she felt in her own ears. The bed was recording her heartbeat and respiration. For all she knew, those other lines represented her thoughts, her soul revealed in blue and green phosphorescence.

Activated now, the bed reached out to her with its metallic fingers. Machines—Mother's machines—surrounded her, infiltrated her. The tentacles which enfolded her were cold and hard, the sensor pads like suckers leaching out her life.

Aybee broke into an icy sweat. She imagined the sting of wires tendrilling along her nerves, burrowing into her until nothing of her secret, separate self was left.

In a panic, she shoved the respirator panel aside and bolted from the room. She hit the sidewalk at a dead run.

AYBEE CAME HOME TWO DAYS LATER, TWO DAYS OF SLEEPING IN the storm drains behind the abandoned racetrack, two days of wandering from one nameless street to the next, two days of unrepentant visions. She gave up and returned to the apartment when she felt so charged with them she would burst if she didn't get them out on canvas.

Maybe Sibylla was right, maybe she should try therapy again. There were medicines that would make the pictures in her head go away.

But then, Aybee thought, then I really would go crazy.

She grabbed a sketchbook and charcoal stick from the coffee table, threw herself down on the sofa, and began drawing. The charcoal swooped over the textured paper, shadows defining light. She worked quickly, smudging the lines with the side of her hand to show frenzied movement.

"You smell terrible."

Aybee looked up to see Mother standing in the hallway, the wig firmly in place and a new shade of polish on her nails. Cosmetics couldn't disguise the bluish tinge of her lips and fingertips.

The charcoal screeched in protest as Aybee drew it across the paper. Her fingers didn't seem to belong to her any more. The

sketchbook fell sprawling to the floor.

"I've installed a new shower unit," Mother said, brightening. "Wouldn't you like to try it? Twenty individual jets, just like the advertisement says."

Aybee jumped up from the sofa. She knew her hands were filthy, her clothes stained, her hair a nest of lice and tangles. But the moment of inspiration, of grace, was gone forever. She would never get it back.

Glaring at Mother, Aybee yanked off her own clothes. The skin on her torso was cleaner than the rest, and the octopus tattoo stood out against her paleness. In a blur, as she left the room, Aybee saw Mother raise one hand to her mouth.

The new shower unit took up most of the bathroom, shiny pink and chrome fixtures everywhere. Aybee jerked the door closed behind her. A fine, warm spray came from above and below, quickly wetting her skin. A sponge, creamy with scented soap, appeared in a dispenser slot. She began rubbing it over her hair and skin. The itching on her scalp eased and she felt the low hum of the sonic cleaner.

Aybee closed her eyes and opened her mouth, letting the spray wash away taste and sight. She saw herself floating in the billowing steam, a whale balloon, a kite stretched over a frame of fish bones. She stretched her arms over her head and watched the octopus flex and extend. The tentacles enfolded her in their steadfast embrace. Nothing Mother did or said could take that away from her.

IN THE LIVING ROOM, MOTHER PERCHED ON the sagging edge of the sofa. Her fingers intertwined, the knuckles white and fine against the mottled skin. She looked up as Aybee came in, wearing the silky bathrobe, her hair wet and combed.

Mother cleared her throat. "I hadn't realized...." Her voice trailed off. She unlaced her hands and inspected her glitterpolished nails. "We don't know each other very well, do we, after all these years? I was hoping we might..." She took a breath as if steeling herself for an ordeal. "Is there anything you want to...say to me? Anything you want to ask?"

Aybee's mouth stayed frozen, her arms locked at her sides. Her eyes darted about the room. Sweat ran down her clean, scented skin.

After a few minutes, Mother said, "Perhaps it's too much. Right off like that, I mean. You haven't been very...happy all these years, have you? And this last year, since your old nanny died—what was her name, Marsha?"

Aybee wondered how Mother had known about Missa. "Why..." her voice came out in a croak, "why didn't you give me a real name?"

And not just two letters—AB—easy to forget and easier to replace? Is there a Ceedee out there, too, and an Eee-eff, just as crazy as me?

One corner of Mother's mouth crinkled. "I thought you'd like to choose your own name. I gave you one you could set aside when you found out who you were. Or who you wanted to be. I thought my daughter should be her own person, not somebody I designed."

Oh no, roared through Aybee's mind like a tidal wave. Now you'll want me to understand you, to forgive you.

A whisper, dry as the slither of a snake over grass: "I wanted you to have a happier life than I'd had."

Damn you! "Why did you have me at all?"

Mother blinked as if the question surprised her. "Why, for the same reasons any woman wants a child, I suppose, except I chose

the incubator, like so many of my friends. To have a family, someone to belong to, someone to love..."

But you didn't. You didn't love me.

"It was all so simple then." Mother's hands fluttered until she clasped them together. "So modern. Money bought everything—the best incubator, the best nanny, the best schools. None of us thought it would turn out to be this...complicated."

None of you thought at all! What did you think you were raising—canaries?

"Maybe it's too late to start over, or to forgive what's already done. But one thing you must believe..." Mother's voice shifted. "If I could go back and do things differently..."

Wordlessly, Aybee turned and walked out of the room, slammed her own bedroom door behind her. She tore off the silky robe and threw it in a corner, baring her octopus belly to the air. Then she dug under the mattress for the plastic vial of sleeping pills she'd kept for just in case. She swallowed two, dry, and lay back, waiting for them to take her.

AYBEE AWOKE TO DARKNESS. SHE HAD NO idea how long she'd slept. A day, two days? A clammy film had settled over her skin. Her mouth felt cottony, as if she'd been breathing through it. She sat up, rubbing the goose bumps on her arms. The street light which filtered through the blinds showed her a world of ghostly shapes.

She longed to paint these shadows, blurred and shifting, thick with secret meanings. They would seep through her brain and out again, infecting every daylight thing they touched.

Quickly she pulled on clothes, whatever came to hand. Loose pants, shirt, no underwear. Outside in the little rectangle of hallway, she paused before Mother's door. Something was different, something wrong. She listened and heard nothing.

She opened the door. A crimson glow from the control panel tinged the darkness, although the readout screens were dark.

RESUSCITATION FUNCTION OFF

No whoosh-clunk-clunk.

If Mother died now, she stayed dead, with no wonder machines to rescue her. That was why she'd come here, wasn't it? She wanted something from Aybee before she died, something Aybee couldn't give her.

But years ago the room had been white and stinking of alcohol and unshed tears. Aybee had leaned over the hospital bed, staring down at the body as it grew still and stiffer. Under the tangle of wires and electrode patches, the flesh had shriveled right down to the curve-edged bones, the cheeks bleached and pleated like a sun-dried orchid.

Missa, my Missa.

Aybee had taken Missa's cooling body into her arms, both of their eyes wide and dry. Darkness had flooded through her, exploding into images so savage and yet so vivid that if she could

*Aybee's eyes
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the control panel
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fixed on the
RESUSCITATION
switches. But she
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coral. Blood
like seawater
thundered in her
ears, then subsided.
Long moments
later, she stood
there, immobile...*

not get them out and onto canvas, she would surely go mad.

Missa, my Missa, if only it were you lying there now...

Soon the sun would come and fill this room with light, this room where she had once danced her crazy pain out and onto the safe, blank canvas. If she gave in now, Mother would take even that from her. All she had to do was wait, wait and do nothing.

But was it any better to stand by and let a life end than to start one and then throw it away? Why should an old woman's moment of silence now cancel out all the years of silence that came before?

... And what did the stranger on the bed have to do with Mother, this pathetic creature that only an octopus could love?

Aybee's eyes flickered across the control panel and immediately fixed on the RESUSCITATION switches. But she couldn't reach out to turn them back on. Her muscles had frozen, her bones turned to coral. Blood like seawater thundered in her ears, then subsided. Long moments later, she still stood there, immobile, her arms limp at her sides.

AND NOW FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE SHE would remember this moment and wonder. Wonder what it was she'd become, what she'd made of herself. It would take her years to paint her way to the truth, years of tortured visions of fetuses slashing their way into the sterile day, maturing and giving birth in their turn, only to be devoured by their own offspring, another cycle repeating itself.

Aybee crept toward the door, her cheeks wet with sea-salt tears. From relief? She couldn't tell. Or maybe from the certainty of what she'd have to live with now.

She could never go back, never explain, never return what had been taken away.

From behind her came a whispery sigh and a faint rustle of bedclothes. Quick light breaths, one after another. A hand shifted through a patch of street light, as delicate

as a sea-worn shell.

Aybee halted, fingers on the doorknob. She felt foolish and furious all at once. How could she have mistaken an episode of sleep apnea for death? The years of madness had left her blind.

The tattoo seemed to move on its own, drawing Aybee back to the bed. She gazed down at her mother, now breathing regularly in her nest of steel and plastic. Thirty years ago, her mother had stood like this and watched her fetal daughter within the incubator apparatus.

Hardly daring to breathe, Aybee leaned over and slipped her arms beneath the fragile shoulders. Mother's fingers, dry and mute, clutched the back of her neck. A vision rose to Aybee's eyes, the pattern of curled red and blue tentacles between them, forever joining them, unbridgeable barrier and unbreakable bond. She sighed and gave herself over, as the octopus gathered them both in a single, enduring embrace. ♣

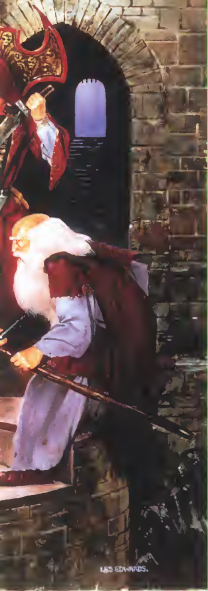


*"Les has been deep into
our nightmares and
brought out things that
were never meant
to see the light."*

BY JANE FRANK

LES EDWARDS HAS AN EVIL twin," concludes Peter Atkins, the British author and *Hellraiser* film screenwriter. "I know this because the cheerful, witty, soft-spoken chap with whom I often get drunk at conventions is patently incapable of turning out the startling, chilling canvases that haunt the imagination of anyone who sees them."

For those who know and love him, that may be the best and only way to explain the "walking paradox," as Jim Burns (fellow Briton and first non-American Hugo Award winner) puts it, "of this apparently pleas-



LES EDWARDS AND HIS EVIL TWIN

ant, sane man."

By all historical accounts, including his own, Edwards is a rather humble, unassuming man. A man who views his illustrative career, and his many commercial assignments, with a refreshing sense of satisfaction and enjoyment, despite its frustrations. He's a man whom Burns, himself no less unassuming, though perhaps envious of Les' lintless navy blazer, describes as a "quiet, easy-going, sartorially rather elegant fellow." Jo Fletcher, the professional editor enlisted to write the program notes for the next World Science Fiction Convention [Intersection in Glasgow, Scotland], for which Edwards has been selected as the Artist Guest of Honor,

describes the artist as "quiet, pleasant...an interesting conversationalist." Yes, and he doesn't slurp his tea.

Edwards refers to his adaptations of Clive Barker's stories as "huge fun to illustrate," and Barker, whose horrific tales Edwards so loves to illustrate, reciprocates by calling Edwards "one of the nicest guys in the business."

Why then would these same people essentially describe him as "spookily well-adjusted...eerily sane"? Why would Fletcher, who sums it up quite neatly, say "Les Edwards may be a decent, friendly, intelligent, charming chap, but his psyche is definitely suspect."? In speaking of Edwards,



Atkins refers to a line in one of Arthur Machen's short stories: "I say I am a man, but who is the other that hides in me?" and comments, "If old Arthur was around to ask Les that question, I have a horrible feeling that Mr. Edwards would be able to give him a very precise answer."

Ah, yes. Very precise. For there's another take on Edwards, and that's the one driven by the view of fans who consider him to be without peer among that rarified group of artists who excel at what is charmingly called 'splatter gore.' Blood and guts, to put not too fine an edge to it. Those who have taken the trouble to think of workable adjectives for his artistry have come up with: grotesque, gory, horrible, outrageous, fearsome, bizarre. Or, as Les Daniels (a writer who has been described as "up to his neck in horror") puts it, "Les Edwards mixes the best blood in the business. I'm proud to have it dripping down an ivory neck on the cover of a book I wrote. His notably nasty paintings always contain these little human touches that make them, if anything, even more horrible."

Check out Daniels' *The Don Sebastian Vampire Chronicles* or *Yellow Fog*. The "deliciously nasty vampire...no wimpy, self-pitying shadow of Dracula," as Charles L. Grant describes Daniels' Don Sebastian, is brought to evil mustachioed life by Edwards. The Don is seated at the chess board, brow furrowed in concentration as he sits waiting for your next move. And to a character interpreted with just the right sickening shade of pallor, Edwards adds hearty red touches to lips, satin cape, and dripping candle, which rests on a candlestick made from a skull.

Those "little human touches" are, in fact, the envy of many an artist who hasn't his obsessive zeal. His images of gore are never rendered haphazardly; they are elegantly horrific, rendered with exacting attention paid to the color of slowly dripping, almost clotted, blood or rotting, putrescent flesh. One cannot help but admire—even while being repulsed by—his gristly talent.

Talent like his, however, while it may come to full bloom in a particular literary genre such as horror, can be preceded by years of fairly tedious art education. Fortunately for Edwards, the tedium was justified when a newly formed illustrator's agency, Young Artists, gave him work right after graduation from the Hornsey College of Art and arranged for his first commission—a painting of a lizard crawling out of a skull. John Spencer, head of the agency and part-time rock star, was the visionary who saw the talent in many young British artists of that generation. Who can say if he knew what perverse skill he had unleashed?

That first image, which was used as the cover for *The Satanic Omnibus*, later was reused for Ramsey Campbell's *Demons by Daylight*...and Edwards' path, dark, twisted and decaying, was set. In the twenty-one years since, Edwards has plied his trade, becoming ever more adeptly horrific.



Book covers, album covers, magazines, movie posters and graphic novels—since 1973, all have seen the imprint of Edwards' adroit hand. In 1989, Games Workshop published *Blood and Iron*, a collection of some of his best artwork. Included are the memorable sketches and drawings for the movie *Incubus*, of which experience he notes in the text accompanying sketches with names like *Fungus*, "I was told at the very beginning that nothing "too bizarre" was required, which cramped my style somewhat."

His images for both his book cover art and movie poster artwork are intense, dramatic and darkly realized; at their best they are sinister, brooding, and macabre, while conveying the atmospheric and moody attractiveness of films noirs. This comes as no surprise to those who know about Edwards' abiding interest in science fiction and horror movies, which now extends to collecting esoteric and

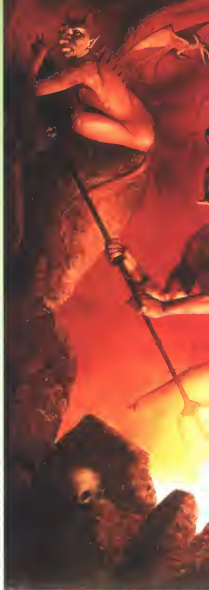
PREVIOUS PAGE: Wizards: Swords and wizards, high color and fast action are what players of Hasbro's Heroquest want to see on their game module covers. LEFT: Kellers Keep: A giant gargyle comes to life, in another Hasbro Heroquest game cover, forcing some well-armed defenders to the brink of disaster, especially the little guy who's already gone over that brink, and knows it! ABOVE: *Nightbreed*: Dark and sinister, this poster was created for the movie based on Clive Barker's story *Cabal*—oddly, the poster was used to promote the film in every part of Europe but Edwards' home country, Britain.



ABOVE: *Yellow Fog*: An elegantly horrific illustration for the second in The Don Sebastian Vampire Chronicles. RIGHT: *Bats Out of Hell*: Edwards created a tour de force of hellishness for a British advertiser. When asked how such images compare to those seen in the U.S., he concluded, "Let's say the Brits prefer a somewhat more robust approach."

mostly forgotten science fiction serials from the '40s and '50s. As a child, Edwards feasted on Chaney, Karloff and Bela, augmented by issues of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, and by ten was reading Edgar Allen Poe and Stoker's *Dracula*. He was lured to popular comics and newspaper strips as much by the subject matter as the style of drawing. Space-flight, aliens, monsters, magicians, historical and fictional heroes; so long as they exuded "dark and sinister qualities," Edwards could regard them as "a world I recognized as my own." Later, after exposure to the classical masters of dark fantasy such as Bosch and Goya, and the romantic visionary artists of the 19th century such as Blake, Waterhouse, and Sargent, he finally had proof that the images of fantasy and the macabre that drove his imagination as a boy were a legitimate artistic pursuit.

That pursuit has led to exhibitions of his work in Germany and France, as well as in Ohio and New Orleans, which he visited with his wife, Valerie, for last year's World Fantasy Convention. He also has won the British Fantasy Society Award for Best Artist twice, in 1990 and 1994. This has finally made him feel, as he says, "very positive about his



painting," despite years of seeing his shockingly horrific characterizations on the yearly *Best Horror* collections, and being used by most of the leading publishers—Daw, Bantam, Avon, Berkley.

In a 1989 interview with writer/editor Steve Jones (for *Fantasy Tales*, UK), Edwards confessed that he'd found his "spiritual home" in horror and science fiction and that he wasn't too concerned about being "typed" in one particular genre. Perhaps that's because he knows what we know: he can paint whatever subject he chooses, and it will be good. And while horror fans may not be aware of it, in many of his cover paintings for books, game boxes, and albums, Edwards hasn't confined himself to gore. As Barker has noted, "Les is one of the great obsessive conjurers of the illustration world. He creates demons and



(occasionally) angels down to the last claw and feather, so they're more real than real."

Edwards typically uses alkyds—a fast drying oil paint—and his style is as suited to *Conan* (he did a whole series for a U.K. publisher) as to a movie poster for Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*, one of the most stunningly sinister and powerful horror images he's created. Yet of this venture, what Edwards recalls with most fondness is the "good fun" he had signing the posters for Barker fans at a huge signing session at one of the best bookstores in the world, *Forbidden Planet* in London. He's done the artwork for several movie posters, including *The Thing* (John Carpenter), *Clash of the Titans* (U.K.), *Hawk the Slayer*, and *Craveyard Shift*.

His work can be romantic, as for an album cover for *Classic Rock*, showing a medieval

knight on a white horse in classic regalia, or monumental, as in his rendition of a Mayan/Aztec fantasy temple for a game box cover for the FASA game *Parlathin*. Whatever the scene, whether it's a stunning interpretation of Hades, as he did for a British advertisement (*Bats Out of Hell*), or game extension pack covers for Hasbro's *Heroquest* games such as *Ogre* or *Wizards*, he paints with sure strokes of the brush in an almost impressionistic style that conveys power and confidence.

His studio is in his house, which means 'no office hours,' but yet a "set routine, otherwise I don't get anything done at all." A propensity for untidiness has resulted in a "jumble of manuscripts, pictures, frames, drawings, books, unidentified bits of paper, old apple cores, ancient coffee cups incubating new life forms, and half completed model kits, all

supported by a layer of dusty magazines waiting to be filed for reference purposes." He long ago gave up the lie that he knows where everything is.

Recent projects have included graphic novel adaptations of two Clive Barker stories, the interiors and shockingly bloody interpretation of Marilyn Monroe for the cover of Barker's graphic novel *Son of Celluloid*, and the most recent *Rawhead Rex*. Barker is a big fan of Edwards' work. "It's sublime," he says. "There is no moral component in Les' work, which is very refreshing." Edwards thinks this may be a compliment.

Ramsey Campbell makes the point clearer. "Les has been deep into our nightmares and brought out things that were never meant to see the light. If he weren't such a fine artist, we might not be able to look." ■



THE PURL OF THE PACIFIC

A Mad Amos Malone story

BY ALAN DEAN FOSTER

Illustration by Web Bryant

"SHARK!"

*Mad Amos Malone
and his cranky
unicorn lock horns
with a magician
bent on reawaken-
ing an old volcano.
More than magic
awaits them in the
depths of the
mountain.*

Amos Malone glanced back over his left shoulder. The men on the whaler *Pernod*, out of Nantucket, were run-

ning along the rail, shouting and gesticulating wildly. One native harpooner was actually hanging off the bowsprit as he did his level best to draw the mountain man's attention to something in the water midway between himself and the ship.

Malone dropped his gaze and squinted. Sure enough, there it was: a dark, sickle-shaped fin cutting the water directly toward him. A couple of the whaler's crew had rifles out and were frantically trying to load and aim. Malone hoped they'd take their time. They were as likely to hit him as the fish.

Tiger shark, by the look of it, Malone decided thoughtfully. Fourteen, maybe fifteen feet. It was still a ways off, uncertain what to make of this unprecedented intrusion into its home waters. In its piscine bafflement it had been preceded by company both common and illustrious, for Mad Amos Malone constituted something of an intrusion no matter where he went.

Leaning to his left, he peered into his mount's eye. It rolled upward to regard him, its owner's dyspeptic temperament much in evidence.

"Shark over there, Worthless." He casually jabbed a thumb in the direction of the oncoming fin. "Just thought

you'd like to know."

Beneath him, the enormous stocky steed of mightily confused parentage snorted once, whether by way of acknowledging the warning or indicating its contempt for their present mode of travel, one had no way of knowing. Transporting them both, the stallion was swimming easily for shore, Malone having decided not to wait for the first boat to be lowered. He was anxious to see this new cattle country, even if the place was as hot as the Brazos Valley in July and twice as humid.

The water above the reef was refreshing, though, and the island lay close at hand. The bustling whaling town of Merciless Sun lay before him, cloud-swathed green mountains rising sharply behind it. A brilliant rainbow arched over the heavily eroded gullies that flayed the slopes, looking for all the world like a gigantic advertising sign raised by elves. Or in this instance, Malone reminded himself, menhunes. Dozens of vessels, mostly whalers like the *Pernod*, swayed at anchor in the Lahaina Roads behind him, their masts representing entire forests transported to the open sea.

They looked hot, too, Malone reflected. Everything hereabouts looked hot.

The *Pernod's* captain had sympathized with his passenger's desire to get ashore but was dead set against any attempt to do so without the use of a boat.

"Most of these ships stink of whale oil, Mr. Malone, sir, and the great-teethed fish that ply these waters are always ready for a hand-out in the most literal sense of the word. Furthermore, if you will not

a dozen spotted butterfly fish, a couple of Moorish idols, and one humuhumunukunua'pua'a (one humuhumunukunua'pua'a being more than enough).

The silence was replaced by several startled but enthusiastic cheers from the crew. Malone leaned forward and whispered in his mount's ear.

"Don't get no swelled head, now, horse. It were only a dang fish." Beneath him, Worthless blew bubbles in the salt water. Perhaps recognizing a kindred spirit if not species, several seahorses had attached themselves to his tail.

The town of Merciless Sun (or Lahaina, as it was called in the native tongue) certainly lived up to its name. Emerging from the water alongside the short stone jetty, Malone carefully unpacked his kit and removed his mount's tack, spreading it all out in the sun to dry. Handling it as gently as a baby, he unwrapped his Sharps rifle from its waterproof oilskin holder. Not much use for a buffalo gun on an island with no buffalo, he knew, but the Sharps was as much a part of him as his beard or underwear. Or for that matter the great, white-dappled, jet-black, misogynistic stallion that stood nearby, nibbling at the exquisite tropical flowers that grew wild where the jetty met the land.

Not everyone glanced in his direction when they passed, but most did. At six foot ten and a slice of homemade chocolate cake over three hundred pounds, Amos Malone tended to draw the eye no matter where he went. Nor was the attire of a mountain man common garb in a seaport town situated in the middle of the great Pacific.

He'd come to this island as a favor to John Cochran, Esq., of Fort Worth, Texas. Pere Cochran had been advised of the excellent prospects to be realized by raising cattle in the islands for export by ship to California, where there was an exploding market for fresh beef, thanks to the recent discovery in that territory of a certain favored yellow metal. Never having visited this particular island and owing Cochran a favor, Malone had agreed to evaluate the possibilities in return for passage and expenses.

Certainly the town of Lahaina was booming. Among its statistics the 1846 census had listed 3,445 natives, 112 foreigners, 600 seamen, 155 adobe houses, 822 grass houses, 59 stone and wooden houses, and 528 dogs, among other items. But not much in the way

of cattle, though Cochran had assured Malone that other entrepreneurs had started to run them elsewhere on the island, using imported Latin cowboys or *españolitos* known to the locals as *paniolas*.

Well, he figured to see for himself. Repacking his now dry kit and securing it to Worthless's broad back, he set out to find lodging for the evening.

As it turned out, lodging wasn't the problem. It was finding a place where a man could sleep. Used to spending the night out in the wilderness beneath the open and silent bowl of the sky, Malone had been forced to endure for weeks the unending rustle of sailors and ship. Looking forward to a little terrestrial peace and quiet, he discovered he'd made landfall in one of the noisiest towns in creation. Whaler and sailor alike started partying early and in earnest, the magnitude of their merrymaking only intensifying with the lateness of the hour.

Giggling, laughing native men and women as well as hopefully hymning missionaries contributed to the boisterous ballyhoo, and it was about two A.M. when a restless Malone recovered Worthless from his stable and set off in search of a piece of ground wherein the stars would serve as his sole company for the remainder of the night.

The shore south of Lahaina was rocky and difficult, but the trail which led to the central part of the island was well-maintained from much use. When at last he came down out of the hills onto the flat, semi-erect peninsula which divided the two mountainous halves of the island, he turned to his right and soon came to a beach of fine

WITH HIS HORN FILED FLAT, Worthless's lineage remained a necessary mystery to all who encountered the exceptional, if ill-dispositioned, creature.

be insulted by my saying so, no matter how well your animal may have weathered the journey from San Francisco, it is no seal, sir, to easily swim this distance to shore. Especially with a rider so large as yourself astride its back."

Malone had smiled down through his great, unfurled nimbos of a beard. "Now don't you go worryin' about of Worthless, Captain. He's a right fine swimmer and takes to the water like a fish."

In point of fact, Malone's unclassifiable steed had once swum Lake Superior from the American side to the Canadian at the height of a ferocious autumn storm. The captain would not have believed that, either, unless he happened to be familiar with a unicorn's extraordinary powers of endurance, which he was not. With his horn kept cut down and filed flat, Worthless's true lineage remained a necessary mystery to all who encountered the exceptional, if ill-dispositioned, creature.

The shark was quite close now, not even bothering to circle. The men on the boat were frantic.

Worthless turned his head, located the shark, and kicked out all in one swift motion. A portion of the lagoon foamed. His left hoof caught the fish beneath its jaw and knocked it clean out of the water. It lay there belly up, floating and dazed. The frenzy aboard the ship was instantly transformed into stunned silence. A dozen or so sharp, pointed teeth, forcibly ejected from their intimidating loci, spiraled lazily down through the crystal-clear water and came to rest on the sandy bottom, but not before being thoroughly investigated by half

white sand. Slipping easily out of the saddle, he started forward in search of a quiet place among the *kiaue* trees in which to spend the balance of the night.

Not expecting to see any buildings, he was therefore much surprised when he found himself confronted by a six-foot high wall of finely worked rock. Atop the solid stone platform stood a long, simple structure of wood posts and poles roofed with thatch. A small fire was burning at the near end, silhouetting the figure of a native seated crosslegged before it.

Malone examined the sky. Among the millions of visible stars were a few clouds. Rain, he had been told, fell in biblical quantities on the eastern side of the island but far less frequently in the west. Still, he had experienced one aqueous immersion already this morning and had no desire to spend the night enveloped in another.

"Aloha, y'all," he said, addressing the native.

The man jumped to his feet as if shot. Malone immediately saw that he was clad in the simplest of raiment instead of the contemporary European fashion favored by so many of the locals in comparatively sophisticated Lahaina. The woven tapa around his waist was complemented by a simple yet well-made headdress. In his right hand he brandished a formidable club carved of *koa* wood studded on two sides with sharks' teeth.

He started yelling in the local tongue until he saw by the light of the stars and his fire that his nocturnal visitor was neither demon nor commoner, but something in between.

"Parlez-vous français?"

"Nope. English. I'm an American. Malone's the name. Amos Malone."

The man, who was quite large and well-muscled but small compared to Malone (as was, for that matter, the great majority of the human race), stepped to the edge of the platform to confront his caller. After appraising the impressively indifferent Worthless with a critical eye, he crouched low to study the animal's rider.

"Malone," he repeated. "I know English good. Learned in missionary school." He gestured sharply with the club. "You come from Lahaina?" Malone nodded. "You must go away from here. This *heiau* is *kapu*."

"Sorry." Malone was properly apologetic. "Didn't know. You reckon there's a place hereabouts where a man could get a night's sleep without being disturbed by more hollerin' and howlin' than a pack o' coyotes make fighting over a dead buffalo?"

The man frowned. He possessed the exceptionally fine complexion of his people, and his eyes flashed alertly in the flickering light. "Coyote? Buffalo?"

"Never mind." Malone turned to leave. "I'll just find another place."

There was silence for a moment. Then the solitary supplicant called out to his visitor. "You do not like the sounds of Lahaina?"

Malone turned back. "Fine for partyin'. Not so good for sleeping." He tilted his head back. "I prefer the company of stars to men."

"Ah." The man had a penetrating, piercing stare which Malone had encountered before, but not frequently. "Come closer, *haole*." Malone complied and met the other's stare evenly.

After several moments during which the only sound was the crackle of fire and the cry of seabirds, the man nodded to himself. "Yes, I can see it. You are a *kahuna*. A teacher, a sorcerer. But what kind?"

Malone scratched through his beard. "Depends on the moment. There's folks think I'm a fairly versatile fella. You a *kahuna* too, mister...?"

The native straightened, his coppery body glowing in the firelight. "I am...you could not pronounce my name. Call me Hau. In your English that means 'Iron'."

Malone extended a hand, which the other grasped firmly. "Pleased to make your acquaintance. Hau you doin'?"

"Hau..." It brought a slow smile to the other's face. "You are not afraid? Many *haoles* find the *heiau*s frightening." He gestured at the temple behind him.

Malone gazed past his host to study the wooden structure and its imposing platform. "Places of power and reverence only frighten

the ignorant. Or those with something to hide."

Hau nodded solemnly and turned aside. "Please. Come and share the fire with me. If you are truly a *kahuna*, or perhaps even a *kupua*, you are more than welcome here. It is the help of just such a one that I seek."

With a hop and a jump Malone was soon standing, and then sitting, across the fire from Hau. The native glanced in Worthless's direction. "You do not tie your animal?"

"The Worthless? That'll be the day. Don't worry, he'll stick around. Ain't nobody else would tolerate him anyways." The unicorn glanced up and with great deliberation and malice aforethought, turned its head and sneezed directly onto Malone's saddlebags.

"What's a *kupua*?"

"The child of a god. You can recognize them by their great strength and beauty. Or by their great ugliness and the terror they inspire in others." Hau studied Malone's face. "Possibly one can be both strong and ugly."

Malone grinned. "Thanks for the compliment."

"I am an *ali'i*, a noble." Hau sat straighter. "I will always tell the truth."

"And what is the truth tonight, Hau?" Malone picked up an unburnt stick and casually toyed with the fire.

Hau leaned closer. "What do you know of Lahaina?"

Malone considered. "It's hotter than the hinges of hell, the whalers have made it the hottest port in the Pacific, and they're always going at it with the missionaries. I understand there's a real school above the town, too."

"Lahainaluna, yes. A copy of your New England schools, and almost twenty years old now. A very good school, which teaches both *haole* and local children modern ways." His voice dropped. "That is why Kanaloaiki hates it."

"Somebody hates a school? That ain't right."

"Not only the school." Hau continued. "He hates everything about Lahaina and what it has done to the people. Since King Kamehameha III moved the kingdom's capital to Honolulu, Kanaloaiki's ire has only increased."

Malone nodded. "Tell your friend things'll settle down. There's fewer whales this year than last, and fewer whalers. There'll be fewer still next year, and the year after that. But the school should stay. It's a good school, I hear, and a good school is a good thing."

"Not to Kanaloaiki. He has vowed to destroy it, and all of Lahaina, and all who share in its life. He makes no distinctions. All are to die: *haoles*, missionaries, and local people alike. The town will be razed to the ground. Not even a breadfruit tree is to be left standing."

"I see." Malone considered the stars. "This Kanaloaiki, he's a powerful chief with a lot of warriors who'll follow him?"

"Worse." Hau shook his head. "He is a *kahuna* *'ana'ana*, a sorcerer who practices black magic. For more than a year now he has been gathering the materials for a great spell which he plans to cast on a certain mountain." The *ali'i* pointed into the darkness. "That mountain."

Turning, Malone could just make out the dark ridgeline of a nearly six thousand foot high peak.

"That is Pu'u Kukui. It has been asleep for as long as we can remember. But the island is not. Less than seventy years ago there was a modest eruption far to the south of here, on the slopes of the House of the Sun." He smiled. "I know this because I have been to the school. I know it did not happen because Pele was angry. It was geology."

"Don't be so sure," Malone murmured. "This Kanaloaiki, he thinks he can reawaken the old volcano?"

Hau nodded solemnly. "Lahaina lies at its foot. The town will die, buried beneath fast flowing superhot *a'a*. Nothing will remain. The school too will be buried, and the ships offshore will go away and not come back. So Kanaloaiki intends. Thousands of people will die."

"You can't stop him?"

"Nothing can stop the spell. Not now." Hau brooded over the fire. "Kanaloaiki began last week. Once begun, it can only be countered after it has started."

"What about your local *kahunas*. Do they all support Kanaloaiki?"

Hau looked up. "No. Most are against what he is trying to do. But they are all afraid of him. His power is very great. But you are not afraid of him, *hale kahuna*."

Malone shrugged. "Haven't met the old boy. Don't see offhand what I can do, though. How do you counter a spell that can't be countered until after it's begun?"

"I have been told there is a way. There is a tool. A special tool. The wisest *kahunas* say it still exists, but none believe them."

"Except you."

Hau nodded. "I would use it if I could to stop what Kanaaloaiki intends. But while I am *ali'i*, I am not a *kahuna*. I do not have the power to use such a thing. If it exists. But another, one not afraid of Kanaaloaiki or under his sway, might do so." He looked searchingly at Malone.

"Whoa now I'm just here to look over the cattle raisin' prospects for a friend o' mine. 'Course, I don't much like the idea of standing by while a few thousand innocent folk get burned and buried alive. Never much did. I just ain't sure I can do anything about it."

Hau considered. "If I show you the best land for cattle, will you consider helping me?"

"It's sure enough a good cause. All right, I'll see what I can do. Now, where's this here good grazing land you're talking about?"

"It's very interesting, but the place you are talking about and the place I am talking about are in fact the same place."

Malone grunted. "Don't say? And what place might that be?"

Hau turned and nodded to his right. "You will see tomorrow, Amos Malone. Tonight it sleeps beneath the blanket of night. Tomorrow I will take you to the House of the Sun."

The House of the Sun, or Haleakala as the natives called it, rose to a height of more than ten thousand feet, completely dominating the entire island. It wasn't its height which impressed Malone, who had seen far taller mountains elsewhere. It wasn't even its breadth, which allowed for a slope so gradual as to be imperceptible.

No, it was the weight of the mountain, which plunged another 27,000 feet to the ocean floor. Composed almost entirely of cement-like solidified *a'a*, the mountain was massive enough to dimple the earth's crust beneath it. Unlike many mountains which were simply magnificently decorative, this one had a presence you could feel. Malone sensed it as the light broke over the distant summit and commented on it to Hau.

"It is the House of the Sun," the native replied simply. "No one may go there save *ali'i*, and none may live upon its upper reaches but *kahuna*. You can go there. I cannot."

Malone reined in Worthless. Hau had been walking alongside the entire way, refusing to ride behind Malone or even alternate in the saddle with him. He was, he assured Malone, quite comfortable walking.

As they ascended, villagers came to gawk at the huge *hale* and his companion *ali'i*. The two travelers were given food and deference in equal quantities, and the locals marveled at Malone's appetite. A few of the children, grinning and giggling, tried to play with Worthless. The great black steed generally ignored them, even when they swung from his tail or tugged on his mane. He munched fruit in quantity and only reacted once to the juvenile attention.

One of the older youngsters stood directly in front of the stallion and reached for the patch on his forehead, intending to pull it loose and see what it concealed. The next moment he was running and crying for his mother, who was unable to determine exactly how he had been struck in the eye by a flying mango pit.

As they climbed, the air grew steadily cooler. About three degrees for every thousand feet, Malone reckoned. More than adequately protected in his buckskins and boots, he marveled at the near-naked Hau's ability to withstand the increasing chill.

At four thousand feet Hau pointed out the excellent high grassland suitable for grazing cattle. At six thousand they entered and passed through a solid layer of cloud. At ten thousand they encountered isolated patches of icy snow.

Then Malone found himself gazing down into a black-streaked, rust-brown crater big enough to hold all of the island of Manhattan.

Hau pointed to a distant cinder cone within the crater. "Down there, my friend. There is said to be a cave. In the depths of the cave is a tool. Only the truest of *kahunas* can recover it. Others have tried, none have succeeded. Whether anyone can even make use of it, I do not know. I know only what the *kahunas* here tell me: that it is the only tool with which Kanaaloaiki's terrible plan can be foiled."

Malone nodded. "Maybe it's a big hammer that I can whack him on the head with." So saying, he flicked Worthless's reins, and together man and unicorn started down into the barren, nearly lifeless crater.

Silversword grew in isolated bunches, thrusting their highly specialized leaves into a pristine pale blue sky. Exotic carmine, yellow, and emerald-hued birds fluttered in and out of the crater on air currents which rose from the volcano's rainforested eastern slopes, each one more brilliantly colored than the next. They reminded Malone of a rainbow's tears. Occasionally a *pueo*, the native owl, would dart low as Worthless's hooves disturbed a mouse.

The browns and blacks and russets and rusts of the crater seemed endless, but eventually Malone found himself approaching the indicated cinder cone. Trotting around its base, he skirted the edge of an undisturbed depression in the crater floor. According to what Hau had been told, the cave was to be found on the far side of the cone.

A few cinders slid away beneath Worthless's hooves, tumbling toward the center of the depression. Each step sent a few more skittering downward. Before long the slide had become continuous. Just to be on the safe side, Malone urged his mount higher.

But instead of ascending, Worthless too began to slide.

As steed and rider fought for stability, Malone saw that the sliding cinders were flowing rapidly toward the center of the depression, and not just from beneath Worthless's feet but from all sides. It reminded him of something he'd seen before.

Despite the unicorn's heroic efforts, they continued to slip. Finally Malone saw something else, something that at last brought back to him the memory of what they had found. It was very much identical, only a larger scale.

A much larger scale.

Two projecting, curving, sharp-edged, sicklelike hooks, each taller than a man, clashed and clacked together expectantly in the exact center of the depression. The owner of those jaws would have been instantly familiar to anyone who had ever encountered them in sandy, dry soils. They belonged to an ant-lion.

An ant-lion that, to judge by the size of the depression and its now visible jaws, must be as big as an elephant.

What it subsisted on here in this barren place Malone couldn't imagine, but he understood now why courageous but foolhardy travelers who defied the old *kapu* to visit this sacred place never returned to their homes. Why even *kahunas* avoided the crater floor.

His first thought was to unlimber the Sharps, but even its fifty-caliber bullets would not be likely to have much effect on the slow-paced nervous system of the gigantic insect. Instead, as Worthless continued to slip and slide toward those expectant, waiting jaws, Malone began undoing one of his saddlebags. Fingering various vials and containers within, he sought desperately for the right one.

Those jaws, large and powerful enough to crack the bones of a man's skeleton like twigs, were much too near when he finally found the vial he'd been searching for. Unscrewing the lid, he tossed the entire open container into the center of the depression, only to see it swallowed immediately.

For a few moments nothing happened and they continued to slide lower and lower. Then the descent ceased. With Malone whispering in his ear, Worthless kicked and scrambled frantically to gain height.

The ground behind them began to tremble. It was an eruption, but not of Haleakala. With a violent, concussive roar, the cinders and air behind them vomited skyward, forming a temporary but spectacular fountain. Malone held onto his wolf's-head cap, his saddle, and his dignity as best he could as the wild rush sent man and mount flying out of the depression.

It had been, he reflected as he and Worthless picked themselves up and continued on their way, one hell of a sneeze. But then, the open vial he had thrown into the pit and which had found its way into the ant-lion's mouth had contained purest essence of cayenne, a substance useful in numerous spells and Tex-Mex cooking, and which, apparently, was not so ineffective when employed strictly on its own.

In contrast to the encounter with the crater dweller, the cave itself was very much an anticlimax, starkly unimpressive. Within, Malone found a few handfuls of bone tools, some old pots and dessicated baskets, and a frayed sleeping mat. Nothing more. Certainly nothing which on the face of it was potent enough to use against a formidable sorcerer.

Nevertheless, he knew from long experience that even the simplest object could be charged with considerable power. Gathering up everything he saw, he secured it to one saddlebag and started back toward the crater's rim, this time employing an entirely different route. Being completely out of essence of cayenne, he had no wish to tempt the ant-lion's energy and appetite a second time.

What was worse, he mused as he rode, was that now he was going to have to have his evening meal inadequately seasoned.

Hau could hardly believe it when Malone rejoined him just below and outside the crater rim.

"You have survived!" the *ali'i* exclaimed. "No one has been to that place in living memory and returned to tell of it."

"I reckon I know why." Slipping down out of the saddle, Malone unpacked the artifacts he had accumulated.

"Now this here basket, what's it for?" he asked.

He passed a finely woven container to the *ali'i*.

Hau's demeanor was less than reverent as he turned the object over in his hands.

"Gathering fruit, I would imagine. It is a simple basket. What did you think it was?"

Malone grunted. "Never mind. How about this?" They went through every item in the mountain man's perilously acquired inventory, Hau discarding one after another with nary a word. Malone was growing not just discouraged but angry, wondering if he'd risked his life only to recover some long dead *kahuna's* household goods. So when Hau's eyes grew wide and his hands began to shake as he held up an ordinary-looking fishhook, Malone hardly knew what to make of it.

"You must have much *mama*, Amos Malone, to bring this out of the House of the Sun."

"So I've been told...in other ways." Malone squinted dubiously at the hook, unable to discern anything remarkable about it. "What do we do now? Go fishin'?"

Hau held the object piously in both upturned palms. "Of course, you cannot know what this is. But by its shape, which I recognize, and its design, which I well remember from the old tales, and by the picture writing on both sides, I know it for what it is."

Malone was hungry. Behind him, Worthless whinnied impatiently. "A means for catchin' our lunch?" he asked hopefully.

Hau handed the artifact to his *haole* friend. "This, Amos Malone, is the *Manai ikalani*, the sacred fishhook which one of the god Maui's ancestresses fashioned at his request from her own jawbone. Using it, Maui raised from the depths of the sea all the land that became the islands of my people and those of their ancestors. When Maui caught the sun here atop Haleakala, the fishhook fell from where it was tied at his waist. It has lain here ever since." Without waiting to see if Malone would follow, he turned and started down the mountain.

"Come, my friend. With this even we may be able to stop Kanaloaiki from destroying Lahaina."

Malone swung himself up into the saddle and followed. "How? By bribing him with fish?"

Hau looked up and smiled. "You do not fool me, *kahuna*. I know

that when the time comes, you will know what to do. Now that we have a hook, we must find a line to attach to it. The strongest line imaginable. There is good rope in Lahaina, fashioned to sell to the whalers. We will find the toughest there is and buy, borrow, or steal what is needed."

Malone considered. "That may not be necessary. You say we'll need a sturdy line?"

"The strongest that can be woven."

"Will that little hook hold a big line?"

Hau looked back and said in all sincerity, "It once raised from the bottom of the sea all the islands of Polynesia."

"OK, I take your meaning. But I think I know where I can find us an even stronger line than you have in mind."

"Excellent. But we must hurry, Amos Malone. See that light on the far slope of Pu'u Kukui?" In the distance, on the upper slopes of the west Maui mountains, Malone could just make out a fitful, flashing light. "Kanaloaiki has begun his evil work. We have little time."

Malone sighed heavily. "In the wizardry business it seems like a man hardly ever does."

"What on earth d'you plan t'do with this ashore, Malone?" George Wilfong indicated the length of material which Malone had sought to buy.

"You needn't know, George. Better you don't." Seated next to the whaler, Malone pulled hard on his oar. Around them, lights flickered from murderous ships riding innocently at anchor.

"That's all well and good, I suppose. All I knows is that you'd bet-

URING IT, MAUI RAISED FROM the depths of the sea all the land that became the islands of my people. When he caught the sun, the fishhook fell from where it was tied at his waist.

ter have me payment enough to satisfy the captain, as you promised, or there'll be hell to pay."

"There'll be hell to pay this night anyway. Rest assured the captain will be satisfied with the trade I have in mind."

Wilfong frowned. "He had better be, or he'll have me keelhaunched. Malone, I don't know what you're up to this night, but one thing I am sure of: you owe me as well as the captain for this."

"Fair enough, George." Malone considered the looming bulk of the island and the tiny but intense light that was now clearly visible just below the shaft of the highest crag. "I hear tell you're thinking of giving up whaling."

"How'd you know that?" Wilfong looked startled.

"Sometimes a man thinks loudly, and I reckon myself a good listener. This is a sweet favor you're doing me, so I expect it's only just and fair that I slip you a sweet notion in return. The far side of this island is wet as any in the world and the soil rich. Right now there's a hunger for all kinds of seasonings in California and gold to pay for them. Myself, I'm here to see to the possibilities of raising more cattle in this country, beef cattle to feed hungry miners. Someone's needed to see to other matters. It's a known fact that prospectors are most all afflicted with the sweet tooth."

"What are you saying, Malone?" Wilfong pulled steadily on his oar.

"Sugar cane, George. I've a thought that it would do well here. Why not try some on the well-watered side of the island?"

"Sugar cane?" Wilfong's brows drew together in thought. "I've

seen how it's done in the Caribbean. But what would I use here to boil the juice? There's no manufacturing in these islands and I couldn't afford to bring heavy gear over from the mainland."

"Use some of the big blubber pots off any whaler," Malone suggested.

Wilfong brightened. "Blubber pots. Now that's a fine idea, Mr. Malone, a fine idea. It just might work, and Lord knows I've experience enough boiling things down. Sugar cane; yes, by God. I'll give it a try, I think, and thankee."

"Welcome."

"But there's still the matter of the captain's payment."

They were very close to shore now. Easing off on his oar while Wilfong did the same, Malone dug deep in a pocket and handed his companion a triangular shaped object that seemed to glow from within with a supernal whiteness. On both sides were etched in black finely wrought scenes of whales, whalers, and whaling men.

"Tis the biggest sperm whale tooth I've ever seen," Wilfong admitted, "and the scrimshaw is excellent, but scrimshaw to a whaling man is like ice to an eskimaw. I'm not sure the captain will accept it a fair trade."

Malone's tone was somber. "Tell him that so long as this sleeps in his sea chest, he need never fear that any ship he commands will come to harm. This here was given to me by a fella name of Herman, after I rescued him from the natives down in the Marquesas." The mountain man chuckled. "Been writin' about it ever since, he has."

"The scrimshaw on this tooth was done by a Maori fella called

have a word with the old gent."

"He is protected." Hau was looking around worriedly.

"By what?" Malone searched the *kahuna* 'ana'ana's immediate vicinity. "I don't see anything."

"If you do, you will die."

"Pretty good protection," the mountain man agreed solemnly.

"How do we deal with guardians if we can't look for 'em?"

"They will declare themselves. Listen for their presence. Listen for the chanting. The old chanting."

They continued to approach. Once, Malone thought he saw Kanaloaiki glance in their direction and smile evilly before returning to his work, but he couldn't be certain.

What he could be sure of as they drew very near indeed was the rise of a distinctive moaning, the echo of a dirge signifying the proximity of doom incarnate, and the smell of death drifting like black floss on the wind.

Hau shut his eyes tight and turned his back to the sorcerer's position. "That is it, that is the sound of which I spoke! The Marchers of the Night! To look upon them is to die."

Unperturbed, Malone spat to his right. A small spot on the ground sizzled. "Marchers of the Night, eh? What sort o' outriders might they be?"

"The souls of dead *ali'i*. Only a *kahuna* 'ama'una can control them, because his withered soul is given over to evil. Somehow we must get close enough to Kanaloaiki to break the spell the instant it has begun, but we must do so without looking directly upon him."

"Kind o' like workin' in Washington."

Fumbling in a saddlebag, Malone removed a scratched, chipped, but still serviceable mirror. Pulling hard on the reins, he turned Worthless about. Using the mirror to scope their route, they resumed their ascent, Worthless following Malone's guiding tugs on his reins while methodically advancing hind end first.

"A clever trick." Hau kept pace by the simple expedient of striding backward alongside Worthless. "What made you think of it?"

"Old acquaintance of mine name of Perseus had to deal with a similar dilemma once. Involved a woman." He adjusted the mirror. "Works better with a bronze shield, but it's danged hard to fit one in a saddlebag."

"Ah," Hau murmured. The moaning rose

louder around them. "It will still be difficult to get close to Kanaloaiki with so many Marchers about."

"Actually, I had kind of another notion for dealin' with them." So saying, he extracted not from the ubiquitous saddlebags but from a pocket a small, tubular instrument. Placing it in his mouth and using the fingers of one hand to manipulate the notes, he began to tootle a winsome tune.

Hau winced. "A strange music, but somehow attractive."

Malone could only nod a response, his mouth being full of instrument.

The moaning grew shrill and strident. Then, astonishingly, it began to mellow, harmonizing with and eventually chanting in counterpoint to the tune Malone was playing. Still backing Worthless up the mountainside, he played on, until he had all the dead *ali'i* moaning in perfect time to his music. Gradually they drifted away, moaning softly and, Malone was convinced, contentedly. Only when the last of them had vanished into the all-absorbing night did he remove the instrument from his mouth.

"Reckon we can turn about now. I expect they're gone."

"How did you do that?" asked Hau. Ahead of them, Kanaloaiki saw that his protective spirits had departed and worked furiously to finish his spell.

"Friend of mine named Louie Gottshalk composed that little tune. It's a cakewalk; they're pretty much irresistible. This variation incorporates a little voodoo. Louie's from New Orleans and he doesn't

WHAT HE COULD BE SURE
of as they drew very near was
the echo of a dirge signifying
the proximity of doom incar-
nate, and the smell of death...

Quehquoag, who pried it from the hull of a capsized lugger out of the Fijis. Came from a white whale, he told my friend. Last I heard, Herman was still workin' on that particular book." Malone turned thoughtful. "Ought to be out in a year or two, I reckon."

Wilfong was still doubtful, but willing to be convinced. "All seamen are superstitious, captains no less so than common sailors. The size of it..." He hefted the enormous white tooth in both hands. "It's warm to the touch, as if still connected to the lower jaw of its owner." He nodded to himself. "I think the captain will accept it. You must be badly in need of this," and he gestured at the cargo they towed behind them, "to part with so powerful a talisman."

Once more Malone's gaze turned to the mountain. "The world's full of talismans, George, but short on good people, and shorter still on good schools."

Hau led the way up the western slope of Pu'u Kukui, which was steeper and brushier than that of Haleakala. They were guided by the baleful light of Kanaloaiki's work, which pierced the darkness like a malevolent eye.

"There!" The *ali'i* pointed, and Malone found he could see clearly. The old man was wrinkled and bent as an old *ohia* tree, but his voice was unbowed. The fire into which he was casting ingredients and words blazed higher with each successive addition. Kanaloaiki took these from a pile off to his right; a pile which was growing smaller by the minute.

"See here," suggested Malone, "why don't I just ride on over and

publish everything he composes. I figured an enchanted cakewalk was bound to work on any bunch of spirits called the Marchers. Just weren't completely sure it'd sound good enough on a kazoo. But they seem to have cleared out right promptly."

"Powerful magic!" exclaimed Hau.

"But not powerful enough," declared old Kanaloaiki with a sneer, overhearing them. Stepping back and raising his arms, he pronounced the final words of the spell. As the earth began to tremble, the old *kahuna* 'ana'ana started to laugh. "Say farewell to all the evil that is Lahaina, for the earth is soon to take her back! Sprite of Pele, heed my call!"

For the first time since Malone could remember, Worthless lost his footing. The mountain man was thrown to the ground. Recovering quickly, he staggered to the unicorn's side as the earth heaved and buckled beneath them. Hau didn't even try to rise. Sprawled helplessly on his side, the *ali'i* looked on in horror.

In front of old Kanaloaiki the ground split asunder. An unholy refulgence bolted from the depths as a hellish yellow-red glow illuminated the sky. Slick and viscous, a lava could be seen rising within the dilating cleft, bubbling and boiling, ready to pour down the mountainside and roar through Lahaina, incinerating and inevitably burying everything in its path.

"The *Manai ikalani*!" Hau shouted. "Quickly, Amos Malone!"

"I've got 'er!" Malone was fumbling with the saddleleaves.

"The line," the *ali'i* yelled, "what about the line? Do you think it will be strong enough?"

"I reckon!" Malone hollered back. "Figured since you said we were liable to be dealin' with some serious heat, we'd want something that wouldn't burn too easy!"

A mountain man must be self-reliant in everything, must know how to cook as well as shoot, repair leather as well as hunt, even fix his own clothing when there's nary a tailor within a thousand miles. So Malone had no trouble threading the line through the fishhook...though drawing one of the iron links through his teeth in order to make it thin enough to fit through the eye did set his mouth on edge.

With the hook securely fastened to the line, he began to twirl one end of it over his head, the sacred *Manai* thundering through the air like a hogtied earthquake. What he was about to try was not unlike roping steers down in Texas, except that his target this time was at once larger and more difficult to hold down and the line itself just a tad heavier than your ordinary lariat.

Not knowing if he'd have the opportunity for a second chance, he did his best to fling the hook straight and true. It soared across the expanding seam in the ground, trailing the spare anchor chain from the *Pernot* behind it. The iron links clanked above the roar of the superheated earth as they landed on the far side of the widening chasm.

The fishhook struck the earth...and stuck. With a sharp tug Malone set the hook. Making sure the other end was secured to the pommel of Worthless's saddle, he swung himself up and slapped his mount on the side of his scruffy neck.

"Ready there, Worthless? Back, boy! Back 'er up now!"

As Hau looked on in awe and Kanaloaiki in aghast fury, the muscular quadruped slowly began to back to the south, digging his hooves into the ground and pulling the anchor chain with him. The crack stopped expanding and began to contract as Malone drew it shut, binding up the wound in the earth as neat and clean as any surgeon would stitch up a wound. A few dollops of lava boiled out of the ground before the rift was sealed completely. By the time Malone called a halt, the lava near the top of the vent had cooled sufficiently to seal the opening.

No ordinary horse could have managed it, nor even an ordinary unicorn, but Worthless, for all his equine peccadilloes, was special.

"Atta boy. Now stand!" Malone patted his steed on its neck as he dismounted. Worthless snorted and fell to cropping the nearest bush, breathing no harder than if he'd just pulled a wagon from a muddy-bottomed creek.

Avoiding the site of the vent, where the ground was still too hot

to walk upon, Malone joined Hau in approaching the stymied sorcerer. The frustrated *kahuna* 'ana'ana did not try to contest their approach, did not even lift an arm to defend himself as Hau raised his formidable club.

Malone put out an arm to forestall the blow. "Easy there, Hau."

The *ali'i* looked at him. "But if we let him live he may try again."

Malone shook his head. "I don't think so. Take a good look at him. Can't you see he's done for?"

It was clear that the excruciating effort had used up the old sorcerer utterly. Lying back, his breath came in increasingly difficult gasps. A grim-faced Hau stepped aside, satisfied.

"Evil can be exhausting," Malone expounded.

At that the old man turned to face him. "You are a great *kahuna*. I did not know there was such among the *haoles*."

"Not many," Malone told him. "Say, how come you can speak good English?"

"I too went to the *haole* school." With obvious difficulty, the old man sucked air. "It is not *haole* learning I was trying to kill. Only *haole* culture. It overruns the land like a big wave. It is overrunning this land."

Hau stepped forward. "I do not know about that, old man, but I do know that it is wrong to kill innocent people. I will have a *kapu* put on this spot so that none will come here and see what you have tried to do. No one will disturb the metal rope, and this ground will stay peaceful."

"You will see," the old man wheezed. "One day, you will see. Or your children will." His head fell back as he gazed into the star-flecked black crystal of night. "I hear the Marchers. They could not protect me, and now they come for me. Life is never just; death always is."

With that he went away, eyes open to the darkness and unfulfilled.

"Reckon that's that," Malone began to secure both ends of the anchor chain, choosing volcanic spurs that were firmly a part of the solid rock of the mountainside. Hau tried his best to help, but though he was accounted a strong man among his own people, he could not move any part of the heavy chain, which Malone handled with apparent ease.

"You have done a good thing this night, Amos Malone. Give me the *Manai*."

Without word or objection, Malone handed it over, saying, "What'll you do with that?"

"It is too dangerous to keep where others might find it. I will take paddlers and a canoe far south of here, to the southeast even of the big island where the sea is very deep. There I will throw it into the ocean. It will fall to the depths and not raise any more land until it is safe." A sudden thought made him look closely at the massive *haole*. "What will you tell your friend about our cattle lands?"

"That he'd better get here fast if he's interested, before these *espanolas* already working the slopes buy up all the good grazing. And I reckon you might try to buy some for yourself as well, now that the king's allowed as how private folks can own their own plots. Me, I'd recommend acquirin' that beach where we met up."

"Beach?" Hau made a face. "What would a man want with empty beach? You cannot grow anything on it or raise any animals. There is no good water there. Such places are worthless." The unicorn pricked up its ears, whinnied querulously, and then returned to its cropping.

"Mebbe they are now." Malone swung himself up into the saddle. "But take my word on it. Your grandchildren'll thank you." So saying, he started downslope toward the flickering lights of Lahaina, its raucous inhabitants blissfully unaware of the fiery death they had so barely avoided.

Hau followed at his own pace, thinking hard as he descended the slope. Beach? What would any man want to own beach for? He decided that his new *haole kahuna* friend was joking with him. There was beach all around the island, most of it even more desolate, white, and sun-struck than the place where they had met. No one owned it because it was not worth a single American dollar.

And surely never would be. ♦

You can be a silicon superstar with Maxis' Klik & Play.

YOU COULD HAVE SPENT HOURS DOWN IN THE BASEMENT LEARNING TO PROGRAM assembly language. You could know every register in a VGA (video graphics array) card better than you know your own name. You could have been a great game designer. It could be your face on all those techie magazines. You coulda been a contender. But you let little things get in your way, like maybe...life. Still, you wish you could stir those bits together and put your own stamp on a computer game. Maybe it's not too late.

Programming a game is not so different from writing a novel. Just about any idiot with a word processor can turn out a book. (Hey, I've done it. People have even paid me for it. Case closed.) And just about any idiot with a compiler can crank out a game. (I've done that too.) The trick, in both cases, is to turn out something really good. (I don't know if I can claim that for either product.)

Programming a sharp game is quite a demanding task. Most games these days are major production numbers, with artists, designers, producers, directors, programmers, musicians, play testers, writers, and a cast of dozens, if not hundreds. Maybe there are no Gaffers and Best Boys, but the resemblance to movies is becoming more and more pronounced. Production numbers like Origin's 53 million *Wing Commander III*, with Mark Hamill headlining a cast of professional actors, are pushing the industry headlong toward the land of Sillilwood,

where Silicon Valley and Hollywood converge.

But take heart. Even if you don't know a byte from a gobble, you've still got a chance to become a silicon star with Maxis' new program *Klik & Play*.

Maxis is best known for a series of award-winning, money-raking projects all beginning with the syllable "Sim." These programs bring high-end simulations down to the game level and let you monkey in the lives of little sim people, sim species, and even sim planets. If you've never played around with *SimCity 2000*, you've missed one of the best ways to waste time ever invented.

Klik & Play diverges from the rest of the Maxis lineup. It doesn't try to simulate anything. Instead it offers a set of tools that let you create games without a line of programming. Such "game generator" programs are not exactly a new idea. Bill Budge (another of those programming heroes whose success I envied), created a program called *Pinball Construction Set* over a decade ago, which let metal ball fans create new playfields to their heart's content. It was one of the truly great game programs of all time. Since then, dozens of game generators have come and gone, but few, if any, of them have actually enjoyed much success.

Klik & Play may be the most innovative and ambitious game generator yet invented. It's not well-suited to all types of games—you're never going to clone *Doom* without learning how to raycast. Face it and go on. But for what it is good at, *Klik & Play* does an amazingly professional job. Beyond that, it's the first program of its type that actually makes it a blast just to create a game.

If my word processor was this much fun, I'd write encyclopedias.

The creation of a game in *Klik & Play* begins by dragging objects onto the screen. These objects can be motionless pieces of background or active participants in the game. A double click on any object brings up a menu which lets you determine whether an object is to be moved by the player, act as an obstacle, or just lie there.

The best way to see how the system works is to simply drag a half dozen objects onto the screen and start the clock running. As soon as two objects bump into each other (let's call them "Man" and "Superman"), a nice little window will appear, asking you what you want to do about this collision. The choices are fairly simple. You might get rid of Superman. Or maybe Man. Or maybe

Klik & Play is the revolutionary instant game creator. With a little mousing around you can find all the parts, pieces, characters, backgrounds, music, sounds, explosions and animations you need.





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Clydon Scout Craft:

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- ★ Phaser

Galactic Empires is a science fiction trading card game. While in command of Sector Headquarters you conquer terrain; deploy bases, ships, crew and special equipment; and cautiously avoid space monsters, hazards and other occurrences. The objective: Eliminate your opponents' Sector HQs, conquering the sector and eventually the galaxy.

Players choose which empire they will represent: Krebiz, Argonian, Corporation, Mechad, Bolzar, Vektren, Indirigan, Dragon, Scorpead, Clydon, Tufor or P.O.T. More empires will be added to the game on a regular basis through additional expansion sets.

Game Mechanics: Each player uses his own deck of cards (Basic Game allows two players to use one deck). There can be as many or as few cards in the deck as you wish. Each turn consists of applying the output from your terrain to your bases & ships, playing cards from your hand and firing weapons.

The Cards Themselves: Each card is in dazzling full color from an assortment of different artists and illustrators. Each card has the rules needed to operate that ship, system, crew person, etc.

This card game is deceptively simple to learn. Even non-gamers pick it up quickly. More importantly, the game has the strategy of spaceship combat and a fantastic science fiction flair.

Galactic Empires lets you live the science fiction, control events in outer space and experience the Far Side of the galaxy. Every science fiction enthusiast should get this game.

C4 Lieutenant



Illustration © 1995 Lawrence Allen Wilkies

Lieutenant:

Illustration: A human lieutenant in Corporate service.

- Causes one crew card of lesser strength at his location to function as if that crew were strength 8.

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this is an event that should add to the player's score. All of those things are easily defined with a little mousing around. These actions can also include spiffier effects, like turning Superman into a puff of smoke and accompanying the whole event with a little musical number. Wagner might be appropriate.

As more events occur, you'll be asked to define what happens with each one. In less time than you might believe, you'll have defined every collision that can happen. Every object in your little virtual world will be interacting with every other object. And harmony, or at least controlled chaos, will reign.

You don't have to be a great artist to get things rolling. Maxis has provided a large set of items, many with several frames of animation, that you can use to jump-start your creations. Should you have aspirations to design your own heroes and villains, the built-in animation tools are among the strongest offered on a PC. I don't just mean they're good for a game program, they are flat out good—right up there with the equivalent tools with dedicated multimedia programs like *Director*, and in some ways, better.

Sound effects are also well represented. *Klik & Play* has the ability to play both digitized sounds and music stored in Midi formats. If you're willing to sacrifice a bit of speed, you can even turn on a multisound feature that lets your games play more than one digitized sound at a time by combining the wave forms. That's a trick few commercial products can handle.

As with the bountiful clip art, *Klik & Play* is also replete with "clip sound." There are hundreds of groans, thumps, thuds, zips, and zaps. Your tools for editing these sounds are limited, but if the enclosed selection doesn't have the particular death scream you need for your project, you can digitize it yourself or drag it in from another package.

When you hit the limits of what you can do from the interactive editor, page over to the event editor screen and you'll find that the horizons move way, way out. Following a spreadsheet analogy, the event editor lets you really refine the interactions of objects. This is the place to go for explosions that actually expand and shrink, enemies that split into evil clones, and monsters that appear at random intervals. From here you can also address several "properties" for each object on the screen. Like the variables in a traditional programming environment, properties serve as a place to store information about the condition and situation of an object.

With some creative play, it's possible to make quite a few types of games with *Klik & Play*. It excels at shoot-'em-ups. Anyone who has forgotten the simple pleasure of downing a googolplex of *Space Invaders* or dodging the stingers of antic *Galaxians* will find these classics easily imitated. *Asteroids*-aholics and *Missile Commanders* will also find that their personal addictions can be cloned.

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There are also a number of styles of play that *Klik & Play* is just not good at. Despite the valiant attempts in the provided sample games, there is no way to do a decent one player driving game. Likewise, an acceptable pinball game is apparently a lost cause. (Bill Budge, where are you now?) Though the program makes a lot of provisions for running and jumping games, it's very screen oriented, which eliminates any thoughts of a side-scroller in the style of Mario or Sonic. The best you can manage is something along the lines of the original *Donkey Kong*.

A couple of additional caveats apply. If you're running a 386, or even a slow 486, things can bog down if you put too many moving objects in a game. You'll also have to make sure that you have the hardware needed to run Windows in 256 color mode, and a sound card that Windows supports.

The only thing standing between you and making a mint with a game you've created in *Klik & Play* is Maxis' legal department. Despite the intimations of their ads and the back of the box, every game created with *Klik & Play* is drenched with legalese warnings that you cannot sell it either as a commercial product or as shareware. Supposedly, this can be remedied by acquiring a developer's license from Maxis. But if you actually manage this feat, you must have more persistence than a giant barnacle. Unless things change,



Players act their parts in *The Great Dalmuti*.

Klik & Play is good only for experimenting and for passing games along for free. Which is a terrible shame.

So now three things stand between me and my chance to be a game design superstar—ability, creativity, and a little piece of paper from Maxis. At least one of those looks like it might be fixable.

The Great Dalmuti (Wizards of the Coast, available in all hobby shops and retail stores). *The Other Side of the Cards*.

Richard Garfield, the principal hand behind *Magic: The Gathering*, hasn't been slacking off since that success. In his latest effort, he returns to card games, but this time

there's a distinctly different slant.

Where *Magic* leans on a plethora of fantasy elements in the cards and design, the fantasy in *The Great Dalmuti* all happens above the table top. The card game itself is a fairly simple affair, closer to hearts than bridge on the difficulty scale. What makes it more fantastic than a round of *Rook* is the way the rules encourage social interaction among the players.

The winner takes on the persona of the Greater Dalmuti, ruler of the social order represented at the table. The next player becomes Lesser Dalmuti, second in command. The remaining players fill the rest of the niches, from various merchants down to the lowest rank of Greater Peon.

As in the real world, the Peons do the work and the Dalmuti skim the cream. Players are encouraged to act their parts, being either magnanimous or snobbish as the Dalmuti, sniveling or striving as Peons. Props can also be used: Dalmuti sit in the grandest of chairs; Peons crouch on broken stools or squat on the floor. In this world, there is a chance for even the lowest Peon to pick up a few hands and rise through the ranks, all the way to Greater Dalmuti. Which gives him the chance to take down his nose at the previous ruler.

This role-playing element turns a round of cards into a nifty social event. The rules suggest the game can be played with five people, but the more the merrier. This is no AD&D or

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Magic; this is pure fun. The next time you've got some friends and some time to waste, open up a pack of *The Great Dalmati*.

Ecstatica, (Psychosis, Cambridge, MA 617 497-5457). One nightmare, with eggs.

One of the challenges confronting the latest generation of PC games is how to make a game world seem more "real." One solution is to add "depth," that is, to extend the game into simulated 3-D, allowing the characters to move in and out of the screen as well as back and forth.

Traditional graphic adventures like the *King's Quest* series use sprite animation. Every frame of the character's movement is defined in the same way that characters in an animated cartoon are drawn. Memory and storage constraints, even in this day of CD-ROM, make this kind of animation difficult to handle in 3-D.

An alternative system used in games like Infogam's *Alone in the Dark* defines characters as a set of polygons. The problem with the polygon approach comes in the limitations of the current set of computers. While some of the new generation of dedicated game machines have hardware designed to render polygons, most PCs have to do the work the hard way. This limits the realism of polygon based animation and makes the characters in these games look something like pieces of moving origami.

For their new action adventure game

Ecstatica, Psychosis took a different approach. Instead of building the character's bodies from polygons, they built them from spheres and ovoids—egg-shaped objects. The advantage of this system is clear. While it can take dozens of polygons to generate a rudimentary leg, only three ovoids can do the same work and do it better. The ovoids used in *Ecstatica* define fluid, convincing characters. On occasion they seem a little "loose" at the joints, but the overall effect is far more convincing than simple polygons, and I expect to see this technology pop up in more games in the future.

The story of *Ecstatica* begins when your character wanders into a small village in search of a place to fill her empty canteen. There she swiftly encounters a number of creatures who have properties that are both comical and frightening. One thing you should know right away is that *Ecstatica* is not a game for children. Though its cast of villains may look like they spilled out of a child's toy box, the display of aggression and violence in this game is so convincing as to be genuinely disturbing. There is also some twisted religious symbology in the town which might upset those inclined to be upset.

If you avoid getting killed—which happens all too often—you can explore the town. You will discover a frightened and sometimes demented populace, and may eventually discover the source of the creatures which plague the village.

Action in this game is all real time. You can walk, jump, climb ladders and stairs, punch, kick, and use weapons, all with a bare minimum of keystrokes. But you had best learn those keystrokes quickly. Like *Alone in the Dark*, *Ecstatica* involves a lot of direct hand to hand combat. It's not a brainless punch and kick fest, but if you don't know where to find that punch button when you need it, you'll soon be seeing one of the game's gruesome failure sequences, which invariably feature your character looking very, very dead.

The game system is not without its flaws. The backgrounds, which are drawn in a more traditional style, often fail to interact cleanly with the animated characters. It's all too easy to end up with a character's arm embedded in a table, or to bend over and see your head vanish into a wall. There's also a frustrating lack of interaction with some of the objects scattered around the village. It can be very irritating to hear your character state, "But, there's nothing here" over and over when there very clearly is something, right in front of the little texture-mapped nose.

Ecstatica has its weak points, but it offers a distinct change from most fantasy adventures, and the ability to play either a male or female character is a definite plus. If you're in the mood for a darker brand of fantasy, the nasty nightmarish plot of this game may just be what you're after. And the innovative style of the animation is worth half the price of admission. **B**

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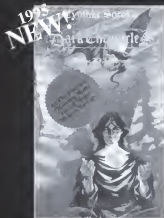
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MARIS

Continued from page 55

stepped a little dog caught crossing the street, his nose flaring with incomprehension.

THE PALACE WAS AN ANCIENT PLACE, THE dwelling of Maris's kind long before the valley people had come in their ships and built their symmetrical town at its feet. She directed Podge through unknown streets, where once the mountain path had trailed away from the palace, until she was at its gate. Abandoning her perch, she made Podge's halter rope fast to the granite ring extruding from the tower.

The gate wheeled open under her hand and she passed beneath the stone arch proclaiming this place the hallowed palace of the marrow of Horus Mons. Her bare feet took pleasure in the flat cool flagstones; her fists gripped the torn hem of her *gosha*. Mounting the steps hewn from heart of oak, she put both hands on the palace door and pushed with all her strength to swing it wide.

There were no echoes in the palace, the hearthmaid knelt still at the grate, a footman in a fustian coat arched over her with his scissors to trim a lamp on the mantelpiece. Maris walked the long halls of the palace, chose the back stairs, and made her careful way down the crooked narrow corridor past the kitchen where the cook tossed a headless fish in his sautéing pan. The fish hung by its tail above the pan, a glittering of white wine drops clouded around it, as if it had jumped up from the sea.

Maris climbed the back stairs slowly, holding the rail, the steps screeching under her slight weight. She kept to the sides, like a cat, until she came upon her husband's chamber. The door was wide, showing a fringe of the carpet, a hunched and silent scribe at the foot of the vast bed. Maris breathed deeply, spoke the invocation under her breath. *Peace be the strong heart, that none shall know fear*, she said, and peeped around the jamb.

Her husband lay like a great corpulent ocean creature under a blue counterpane, his hairless pate cushioned on four feather pillows, his enormous gray beard combed tidily upon his chest. Maris's hand stole to her lips. He had grown old, though his strength showed undiminished, his arms like iron barrel straps beneath his white nightshirt. His breath swelled in his ribs, he gently snored. Between his hands lay the book of the *Euphoriad*, its covers swollen with age. Then, as if he had caught the scent of her, he stirred up from his dream and opened his eyes.

"Wife?" he called, certain of the answer.

"Husband," she said, still peeping at him from behind the jamb.

"Will you show yourself?"

Unbidden, the self-consciousness came again, as she thought of the sun's work on her once-pale cheeks, the freckled skin collapsed against the blue veins of her strong hands.

"I have only come for the book," she said. Her husband rose in his bed, the book cradled in his arm.

"You must ask for the Decision, wife. I am not long for this place. If I should die before you ask it, the mountain will shake and the river will swallow the valley."

"And you live on. As long as you like."

"This quiet is not my doing!" he said, "I lay here, scarcely able to draw a breath, a pain here," he said, his hand massaging his great chest. "The scribe was reading. He stopped; I believed he thought me dead, and yet...I am not dead. Only waiting for you. Come out from there."

Maris took a step away from the jamb, considering, then stepped into the circle of light near his bed.

"Ah," he said, "Have we waited so long? That your beauty should ripen into a fruit of such sweetness? Maris..." He reached for her hand, but she shook her head.

"The book was never yours. You have misused it, made yourself a king among the newcomers."

"They are good people, wife," he gently chided.

"Good! Not good, not bad. Empty."

"They needed to learn. I taught them from this book. It was meant to be," he said, smiling, his teeth gleaming beneath his beard.

"You have not taught them correctly. You misunderstand, you twist, you misinterpret everything in this book. Don't you see? Don't you understand the quiet?"

He nodded. "Of course I do. You have been given the chance to mend your mistake, to ask forgiveness for leaving your husband before he passes from you forever."

"No!" she shouted, her voice thin and forceless in the quiet. "The quiet surrounds you, not me. You never listened! Never once. First came the mountain, then the blessing, I am blessed. Not the king, not the palace, not the people. The quiet has come because it is you who must ask forgiveness. You must ask me for the Decision."

"Me? You have been too long on the mountain, woman. It has bent your mind."

"It is the valley that has made you deaf!" she said. "You should have come with me to the mountain, maybe you would have learned to use your ears."

"To hear you screech like a wild cat? Oh, no, I prefer the peace."

"Then rot in it," she said, reaching for the book to wrest it away from him. He held fast with both hands and pulled hard so that she stumbled forward. Glaring, Maris kept a tight hold, tugging back like a ratting dog.

"The Decision!" he warned, "Ask before it's too late."

Maris braced her foot against the bedstead and pulled until her arms sang. Her husband's hand slipped, he tried for better purchase, the book surged between them, he grabbed. The book burst at its seam, leaving each with an uneven half. A single linen



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page fluttered down on the counterpane between them.

Holding the broken thing like a wounded bird, Maris gaped at what she had done. Her husband leaned forward and took the page. He read it, his beard settling against his chest, and held the page out for her to take. With trembling fingers she plucked the page from him and read, sinking down at the edge of his bed with the ruined book held on her lap.

PEACE BE THE SILENCE, THAT ALL MAY UNMAKE talk.

"WE'VE BEEN SCOLDED," SHE SAID. HER HUSBAND ran the palm of his hand over the expanse of beard on his chest.

"I have been the king for so long," he said, "I have forgotten what it is to be scolded."

"And I have been on the mountain too long to know any scolding but my own."

"I never wanted this kind of peace," said her husband, eyes cast down.

"Nor I the peace I chose. I have always loved you, Folsom. I should never have left the palace."

"You did what you thought was right. I should never have made it impossible for you to stay. Can you forgive me, Maris?"

Their hands crept together on the counterpane, fingers twining.

"I forgive you. Will you forgive me?"

"I will," he said, wrapping her in his arms like barrel straps and kissing her hair. Her arms crept around his neck, and she held tight.

The river's rush filled the room, and there was the cry of a starling. Maris's eyes squeezed tight with joy, there was a lightness in her breast, an easing of her breath, the hard knots that had accumulated in her years of solitude broke away from her, and when she opened her eyes, the beard of her husband's chin was sleek and nut brown, her hand against his nightshirt was smooth with youth.

"Ha!" he cried, leaping up from his bed to spring around the room on his new legs. "Now we can grow old together again! Dance with me, Maris; we won't waste a moment of it!" And he took her hand and waltzed her away through the palace. The scribe, now a child of six again, stood up at the edge of the bed and blinked all around in astonishment.

At the window, the sun glinted on the backs of the approaching ships circling above a bare plain punctuated by the impenetrable walls of an ancient stone palace, the gates of which they never learned to open.

The newcomers thought to build their symmetrical city at the palace's feet, then moved to a far plateau instead, for they were superstitious of the inhabitants who would not admit them, though even there on that far plateau, when the wind sang, they could hear the laughter that wafted from the tower's high windows, and the unmistakable thunder of a stallion's hoofbeats on the plain. *~*

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THE WALLS

Continued from page 51

The *white wolf* asked her again, "Where are you going, Red Rotting Head?"

She looked more closely and saw that he was not like her true love; for he breathed even when not speaking, and the sun, though hidden by the dark and the green of Broceliande, was still high in the sky. She said to herself, "My heart is pure, and I fear no one." But she lied.

She said to the *white wolf*, "What business of yours is it where I am going?"

The *white wolf* laughed and said, "Where everyone goes in this forest is my business, for I see into the heart and into the mind, and I see their true reasons."

Red Rotting Head's will deserted her utterly. She cowered down on the neck of her fine red mare before the *white wolf*. Then he asked her for the third time: "Where are you going, Red Rotting Head?"

All pretense and bluster defeated, Red Rotting Head said, "I am going to Grandma's house with this basket of food for her to eat."

The *white wolf* shrieked in frustration and anger and vanished into the forest, for he saw that her heart was pure and that she had no secret reasons, so he had no power over her.

Red Rotting Head recognized the *white wolf* by his tail as he fled. And now that she had defeated him, she was even more cheerful than before she had met him. As she rode on through Broceliande, she sang a new song:

*Hey sing derry down, derry down a day,
Ain't no wolf gonna get in my way.*

So she rode on through the dark and the green. As she drew near to the forest's far side, she came to where the *gray wolf* waited for her. When her mare smelled the *gray wolf*, she screamed and reared and nearly threw Red Rotting Head. Ants know no fear, but doubt undoes them completely.

The *gray wolf* laughed. "Child, child, why are you doing this?" His head was thrown back so that his long gray hair hung down behind him, his eyes were gray in a lined face, and his cloak was the color of lost hours. In his hand he held a palimpsest of aeons.

Red Rotting Head said, "My grandma is ill and needs help and food."

The *gray wolf* laughed all the more, until his sides shook. "Child, child, are there not many more needy and more deserving than your grandmother?"

Red Rotting Head knew in her heart that this was true and she feared for her soul, but she said, "That may be, but I don't know those people, and here is my grandmother close to hand."

The *gray wolf* stopped laughing then and became more cautious. He consulted his palimpsest. "Child, child, do you still believe that this basket is real and can help your grandmother? Can it be that you have not heard that all this physical world is illusory and has no power for good or ill?"

Red Rotting Head's heart knew doubt then, for she could see no particular reason to carry an imaginary basket. But she said, "If the basket is not real, then it doesn't matter what I do with it; and if the universe is illusion, then it doesn't matter where I go; so I might as well continue as stop here."

Then the *gray wolf* barked in triumph. "Child, child, what will it matter if you bring that basket to your grandmother? Your actions are an empty gesture, a bow to an outmoded concept of morality."

At that, Red Rotting Head's heart dissolved within her and she was left utterly without meaning. But she said, "Then all is at my will, and my will is to carry out my task."

The *gray wolf* shrieked in frustration and anger and vanished into the forest, for he saw that her will was iron and needed no reasons, so he had no power over her.

BECAUSE SHE HAD TARRIED WITH the wolves, Red Rotting Head left the forest just as the sun touched the horizon. She urged the mare on, but the sun had set before she reached the gate of her grandmother's house. The mare became an ant again, and she fell to the ground and crushed it; the cloak on her back became a spider's web again and blew away; and the hat on her head became a leaf again and fell off.

As she walked up to the door, she sang, "Who's afraid of the big bad wolves, big bad wolves, big bad wolves," because, having left the forest, she thought she'd seen the last of them.

But the *black wolf* had come to her grandmother's house that day while Red Rotting Head traveled and taken her grandmother. The *black wolf* waited inside for her now, anxious to take her and avenge the humiliation of his brothers.

He wore the nightgown and cap of Red Rotting Head's grandmother as a disguise, but his hands were black and shriveled, and instead of a face, he had two glowing black eyes set in a blackness that was not so much an absence of light as the denial that it could ever have existed.

Red Rotting Head came to the door of the house, naked and alone, carrying only the basket of food her mother had given her, and went in.

The *black wolf* looked at her and said, "But Red Rotting Head, my dear, what red lips you have!"

Red Rotting Head thought how awful the old woman was looking. But she only said, "The better to tempt my true love with, dearest Grandma."

The *black wolf* licked his lips and said, "But Red Rotting Head, my dear, what black hair you have!"

"I see it runs in the family, dearest Grandma," said Red Rotting Head; though she hadn't expected the hair to cover her grandmother's face.

The *black wolf* grinned and said, "But Red

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Rotting Head, my dear, what bright eyes you have!"

"The better to see—" began Red Rotting Head; and then she stopped, because she did see better, and screamed, "You are not my grandma!"

Back in her cottage outside the walls, when the sun was setting and the dark was rising, Red Rotting Head's mother remembered that her enchantments on leaf and on web and on ant would now be ending; so she lay down on her bed and gazed up into her mirror and said a new verse:

*Magic Mirror, o'er my head,
Tell me, is my daughter dead?*

The mirror showed her Red Rotting Head arriving, naked save for a dead ant on her backside, still walking calmly up to the door of her grandmother's house. Then it showed her, without even being asked, that inside the house, the *black wolf* waited.

The sun had fully set now, and Red Rotting Head's true love rose from his cryptic bed and came to the house, as he did every evening at this time. Red Rotting Head's mother met him at the door and, wasting no time or words, told him where she was and how the *black wolf* was laying for her. Then, having done all she could, she returned to the bedroom to watch the pursuit in her mirror.

Red Rotting Head fled through the house, and the *black wolf* followed after, gaining slowly, until at last he trapped her beside the fireplace. And as the *black wolf* came slowly and triumphantly to take her, she wept, for neither her pure heart nor her iron will had saved her from him.

Then she heard a voice from the chimney. "Let me enter!" it cried.

"Enter!" she answered, for she knew that voice. Even as the *black wolf* reached out to touch her, a mist passed down the chimney and came between her and the *black wolf*. It was her true love.

He saw her sobbing and said, "Red Rotting Head, my own true love, why are you crying?"

Red Rotting Head said, "The *black wolf* has come for me, and my pure heart has failed me, and my iron will has fled me."

He laughed then and said, "Do not be afraid, my darling, for where your heart and your will fail, love will suffice. The *black wolf* cannot touch my people, nor we him. But turn your face to me for one last kiss, and I shall make you one of us."

So she turned her face to him and he kissed her, and the *black wolf* howled in frustration and anger and fled into the night. But in that moment she knew why he had said last kiss, and that they would never, could never, be lovers again, though they would always be the very best of friends.

And she still loves and honors her old mother, for she is as dutiful as she is beautiful, and she visits her every night, in their cottage outside the walls of forbidden New York. ♣

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Contributors.

LISA GOLDSTEIN'S FIRST BOOK, *THE Red Magician*, won the American Book Award for Best Paperback in 1983. Since then she has published five novels, the most recent being *Summer King, Winter Fool* (Tor Books, September 1994), and numerous short stories. Her stories and novels have been nominated for the Hugo, Nebula and World Fantasy awards. She lives near San Francisco with her husband Doug Asherman.

Alan Dean Foster was born in New York and raised in Los Angeles. Betty Ballantine bought his first novel, *The Tar-Arim Krang*. Since then, Foster's sometimes humorous, occasionally poignant, but always entertaining short fiction has appeared in major SF magazines as well as in original anthologies and several "Best of the Year" compendiums. He has produced the novel versions of many films, including *Star Wars*, and the three *Alien* films. The collected Amos Malone tales will be a Del Rey book next spring or summer.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes is a recovering New Yorker who now lives in Alameda, California, where he helps to support a multi-species household (cats, dogs, fish, children) by writing training and technical materials for a major telecommunications utility.

Anne Young is a two-time Ready Writing Award winner for her critical essays. A confessed computer gearhead, she owns an administrative support business in the Mad River Valley of central Vermont where she lives with her husband. She is currently at work on several short stories and a science fiction novel. "Mending Maris" is her first professional fiction sale.

Martha Wells was born in 1964 in Fort Worth, Texas. She received a B.A. in Anthropology from Texas A&M University. Her first novel is a fantasy, *The Element of Fire*, and her second novel, *City of Bones*, is also a fantasy (but it isn't a sequel). Presently she works as a systems operator and programmer, and lives in Bryan, Texas.

Web Bryant's artistic skills cross many disciplines in commercial art. He was part of the design team that created *USA Today*. Other achievements: art directing the first national children's newspaper, *Pennywhistle Press*; and creating national award-winning

maps and graphics. His first love is painting, especially when he can work with the wonders of natural and directional light.

When **Todd Lockwood** was a little boy, the only thing he ever wanted to do was to draw. Now that he has a wife, three children and several species of pets, that's all he does—for all kinds of books, magazines, and newspapers. Their quiet life in suburban Denver, Colorado is no longer shattered by the constant howling of the dog next door; however, he still keeps the CD player cranked to the max while he works



Lisa Goldstein



Paul Salmon

DEBORAH WHEELER GREW UP mostly in California, went to college in Oregon, and grew her hair long and protested everything during the '60s. It took three academic degrees to figure out that what she needed to do in life was to write. Her first novel, *Jaydium*, came out from Daw in 1993, and her second, *Northlight*, in February 1995. Her short stories have appeared in anthologies and magazines, and her novelette, "Madrelita," was on the 1992 Nebula preliminary ballot.

Jane Frank owns and directs Worlds of Wonder, a venture dedicated to gaining wider exposure for the art of contemporary illustrative artists who have made SF/F the incredibly successful genre that it is today. Worlds of Wonder now represents, and has available for sale, the original artworks of more than 25 leading artists and sculptors in the field, offering original cover art for books, magazines, calendars, movie poster art, record albums and video covers, role-playing game modules and much more. A selection of 125 artworks are shown in color in the newest 40-page Worlds of Wonder catalogue.

Paul Salmon, an award-winning illustrator, has created graphic arts projects for such clients as the Smithsonian, NBC television, *National Geographic*, *Time/Life Books*, *NASA*, *American Forces Press and Publication Services* and numerous government agencies. He was a participant in the Smithsonian Exhibition entitled *The Artist and the Space Shuttle* and his work is now part of the permanent collection at the Kennedy Space Center. ♦



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